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General Assembly

Seventy-second session

Official Records

12th plenary meeting
Thursday, 21 September 2017, 12.10 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Lajčák ..... (Slovakia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Rabary-Njaka (Madagascar), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 12.10 p.m.

Address by Mr. Danny Faure, President of the Republic of Seychelles

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Seychelles.

Mr. Danny Faure, President of the Republic of Seychelles, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Danny Faure, President of the Republic of Seychelles, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Faure: I would like to join those who have spoken before me in congratulating His Excellency Mr Miroslav Lajčák on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. I would also like to thank His Excellency Ambassador Peter Thomson for making the small island developing States and the rest of the international community proud through his strong leadership of the seventy-first session.

May I start by saying that the thoughts of the Government and the people of Seychelles go out to the millions of people in South Asia, Africa, the United States and Mexico, as well as our island brothers and sisters in the Caribbean, who have suffered unimaginable losses from floods, hurricanes and other forms of extreme weather these past months.We urge the international community to not only respond generously to those countries' calls for support, but also to take the need to upscale the urgent action required far more seriously in order to prevent, prepare for, adapt to and recover from such increasingly destructive climate-related disasters.

Events around the world today sadly show that the theme of this year's general debate, "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet", cannot be achieved without effective implementation of the principles of democracy and a concerted demonstration of will. That calls for good governance, transparency and accountability, which serve as the foundation for the prosperity and security of all nations. Indeed, they put the rights and aspirations of the people at the centre of development, where prosperity is shared by all. We must create the necessary space in society for diverging views and ideas to flourish and be respected. Doing so helps promote unity, tolerance and respect in the population.

Seychelles is, for the first time in its history, experiencing a system of political cohabitation where I, as President and head of the executive arm, am working with a legislature dominated by the opposition. When I first addressed our legislature at the National Assembly almost a year ago last October, I gave my word that we would work together to deliver a better future for our people. Our cohabitation is working well.

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There is a new working environment in which we have dialogue and where we consult. Most importantly, it is an environment based on mutual respect. We are reshaping our Government to make it more inclusive. We are empowering our citizens, especially our youth, by giving them equal opportunities to play important roles in the development of our country and the growth of our economy. In that context, we are improving the environment for free media to play a vital role in nation-building efforts.

Together with the National Assembly we are amending legislation relating to institutions, authorities and agencies so as to ensure that they reflect the new principles of good governance. With greater transparency, good governance and accountability, the independence of institutions and authorities will continue to increase. They are the bedrock of our society.

We are writing a new chapter in Seychelles, where we work together to overcome our challenges and show respect for all opinions in the interest of a Seychelles that unites all of us despite our differences. Openness and a policy of discourse are at the core of my nation's willingness to secure a bold future for our people. I believe that small island developing States such as mine can serve as the moral barometers for what is right. We do not shy from accepting and learning from the experiences of others but, in that regard, we also have valuable lessons to share with others. The path that we are charting in our country can serve as an example to all for the sake of tolerance and a global lasting peace.

(*spoke in French*)

That has been our experience in Seychelles. But as we look around us, what do we see? We see growing instability on a national and regional scale. That is a hindrance to peace and to a decent and sustainable life for all of our peoples. We believe that such factors lie at the heart of the global refugee crisis. That is a problem that could worsen owing to the increasing movements of populations as a result of climate change.

A globalized world economy requires us to act as organized regions in order to give ourselves the best possible chance of transforming our hopes into tangible improvements in the quality of life for our peoples by strengthening the values of democracy and good governance.

That also applies to this institution — the United Nations. Indeed, after a quarter of a century of reforms and counter-reforms of the Security Council, it is high time to harken to the deafening call of more than 160 States Members of the United Nations for true and just reforms. That would be a way for us to react to the accusations that the United Nations is simply a room in which to hold rambling discussions. We would also have an opportunity to practice what we preach.

(*spoke in English*)

For there to be peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet, it is not enough just to throw more resources — financial, human and others — into implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. All of those processes should be democratically governed, underpinned by transparency and accountability throughout and in harmony with and with respect for the natural environment in which we live.

In Seychelles, the private sector, civil society, non-governmental organizations and parliamentarians have joined with the public sector in a national effort to integrate the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals into our country's budget and development plans. Together we are drafting a new national development strategy and a more sustainable national development plan for Seychelles over the next 15 years called Vision 2032. That exercise also includes the integration of Agenda 2063, adopted by the African Union, and the Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action.

The same inclusive approach applies to stepping up our implementation of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change in the light of recent developments. According to the latest science, all stakeholders need to be involved if the international community is to drastically upscale our collective climate action so as to achieve our targets. There is something that I said at the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Marrakech in November 2016 that is even more pertinent today, as we head towards the next Conference of the Parties, led by our fellow small island developing State of Fiji and supported by Germany. Referring to the Paris Agreement, I said,

> "For the very first time in history, a global climate-change deal, giving renewed hope to the world, has been reached. We find ourselves at a crossroads and cannot afford to renege on our

collective commitment to travel the moral path for the sake of humanity."

From small islands come big ideas. Last year Seychelles reached an agreement with the Paris Club and others on a first-of-its-kind $21 million debt-for-adaptation swap to protect 30 per cent of our 1.37-million-square-kilometre exclusive economic zone, partly as an ecosystem-based adaptation to climate change. Also, by the end of this year, we aim to launch the world's first blue bonds to raise another $15 million for sustainable fishing practices in our waters. Both of those measures seek to establish innovative sources of financing to implement Sustainable Development Goal 14, on oceans and seas, and other interlinked SDGs as part of developing the Seychelles' blue economy. We thank our many partners at home and abroad who have helped us on this bold and exciting new path to sustainable development and resilience to climate change and who continue to be actively involved.

The President took the Chair.

In conclusion, I would like to congratulate Fiji and Sweden for the great success of the Ocean Conference in June and its Call for Action. As President of a large-ocean developing State, I would like to reiterate Seychelles' commitment to continuing to play a pioneering role in the search for innovative ways to respond to the Call for Action and implement SDG 14 as an integral part of all the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda.

On that positive note, I wish all the peoples of the world a happy International Peace Day.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Seychelles for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Dany Faure, President of the Republic of Seychelles, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by Mr. Mokgweetsi Eric Masisi, Vice-President of the Republic of Botswana

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Vice-President of the Republic of Botswana.

Mr. Mokgweetsi Eric Masisi, Vice-President of the Republic of Botswana, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Mokgweetsi Eric Masisi, Vice-President of the Republic of Botswana, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Masisi (Botswana): I feel deeply honoured and privileged to deliver this statement on behalf of the President of the Republic of Botswana, His Excellency Lieutenant General Seretse Khama Ian Khama.

On behalf of my delegation, I wish to join previous speakers in congratulating you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. I assure you of the full support and cooperation of my delegation in the discharge of your mandate. In the same vein, please allow me to pay tribute to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Peter Thomson, for his stewardship of the Assembly at its seventy-first session.

I would also take this opportunity to extend a warm welcome to our new Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. António Guterres, and his Deputy and wish them an enjoyable and successful tenure at the helm of our world body. We also thank our former Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his leadership and the valuable contribution he made towards advancing the mandate of the Organization over the past decade.

We are gathered here at the United Nations because we share a common destiny. Despite its imperfections, the United Nations remains the only universal organization that has the moral authority and legitimacy to seek global solutions to the challenges we face. Botswana is of the firm conviction that as Member States, we collectively hold the will and the power to change the world for the better and for the benefit of both present and future generations.

Botswana welcomes the theme of this session, "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet". We strongly feel that that theme is pertinent because it reinforces the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which the global community adopted on 25 September 2015 as a "plan of action for people, planet and prosperity" or a charter for "people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership" in the twenty-first century (resolution 70/1). That theme appropriately draws our attention to four of the five Ps of the 2030 Agenda: people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership. It recognizes the importance of

focusing on people and improving their lives, as they are both the main beneficiaries of development and its greatest resource, as we work to achieve peace and development on a sustainable and resilient basis. The theme thus recognizes the nexus between peace and security, sustainable development and climate change.

In that regard, the 2030 Agenda notes that there can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development. It is therefore imperative that we give priority to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change in order to achieve sustainable development and address climate change.

With regard to people, I am pleased to state that the Government of Botswana embarked on a series of multi-stakeholder consultations involving both the public and the private sectors, civil society, local authorities, development partners and academia in the formulation of our National Development Plan 11, which runs from 2017 to 2023, and in the formulation of our current Vision 2036, which runs from 2017 to 2036. The Plan and the Vision are both aligned to the 2030 Agenda and the African Union Agenda 2063. We purposefully undertook extensive consultations so as to ensure that our national priorities reflect our people's needs and aspirations. We hold the view that our people have a right to sustainable development and improved quality of life. We must, therefore, pursue those twin objectives as a moral and political imperative.

It is important to recall that when we adopted Agenda 2030 two years ago, we acknowledged that every goal, every target and every indicator in the Agenda represents a step towards a better world. We recognized the need for each country, based on its needs and circumstances, to formulate a unique set of actions to achieve the universal goals that we set for ourselves. We also recognized that innovation, science and technology will be critical catalysts in the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

In line with the theme of the seventy-second session, our two national development frameworks place heavy emphasis on improving the quality of life of all people in Botswana through the acceleration of socioeconomic development and the provision of better education, health care and housing, and by tackling extreme poverty, income inequality, gender inequality and unemployment, especially among young people and women. Driven by our strong desire to build an inclusive, peaceful and prosperous society based on the respect for democracy, human rights and the rule of law, we accordingly adjusted our empowerment programmes in order to ensure that they cater to all vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in our society, including women and girls, young people, the elderly, people with disabilities, and children.

To that end, the top priorities of our National Development Plan 11 are human-capital development, social development, the development of diversified sources of economic growth, the sustainable use of natural resources, the consolidation of good governance, the strengthening of national security and the implementation of an effective monitoring and evaluation system.

In order to ensure that all our people live in dignity, the Government of Botswana took a bold policy decision to shift from poverty reduction to the eradication of extreme poverty, which resulted in a marked reduction in the proportion of the population living in abject poverty or below $1.25 per day, from 24.5 per cent in 2002-2003 to 6.4 per cent in 2009-2010. That is a notable achievement considering the fact that in 1985-1986, 59 per cent of the population was living in poverty.

We identified the sustainable use of natural resources as one of the main priorities of our national development agenda so as to ensure that the natural wealth of our country benefits both present and future generations. To address youth unemployment, the Government introduced youth-empowerment programmes, such as the Youth Development Fund, the National Service Programme and the Internship Programme. For the past two decades, more than 25 per cent of the Government's total annual budget has been invested in education and skills development.

In addition, we have implemented a number of flagship programmes, the centrepiece of which is the Economic Stimulus Programme, which was introduced to stimulate the economy and address the infrastructure deficit. We are also proud that Botswana was among the countries that shared their 2030 Agenda implementation experience under the auspices of the recently held High-level Political Forum and Voluntary National Review exercises.

On climate change, Botswana fully supports the observation made in the 2030 Agenda that

> "[c]limate change is one of the greatest challenges of our time and its adverse impacts undermine the ability of all countries to achieve sustainable development" (*resolution 70/1, para. 140*).

In that regard, we welcome the entry into force of the 2015 Paris Agreement on Climate Change and reaffirm our commitment to that agreement. Botswana is pleased to be among the countries that signed and ratified the Agreement before the threshold for ratifications for its entry into force was reached. We appeal to all countries to remain steadfast in their defence and protection of the integrity of the Paris Agreement.

We reiterate our appeal to the Government of the United States of America to reconsider its decision to withdraw from that landmark agreement, which marks a universal effort by the international community to tackle the challenges of climate change. As those present are aware, the challenge of climate change requires collective action, as no single country can successfully address the challenge on its own. It is as if the recent hurricanes and their disastrous effects were meant to underscore to the American Administration that climate change is real. If there is anything positive that we have learned from those hurricanes, it is that it has been able to bring people in the affected states and wider America together — be they young or old, black, Hispanic or white or of whatever religious persuasion.

We also welcome the recent convening by the President of the General Assembly of the first ever Ocean Conference in New York, pursuant to Sustainable Development Goal 14. Even though Botswana is a landlocked country, we are impacted in one way or the other by the ocean environment. We also have a strategic interest in benefiting from marine resources. It is for that reason that we actively participated in the negotiations that led to the adoption of the Convention on the Law of the Sea of 1982, to which we subsequently became a State party.

I am delighted to announce that Botswana has responded positively to international humanitarian appeals, which have been made from time to time in response to humanitarian calamities that have afflicted a number of countries, including the extremely devastating famine in Somalia. Consistent with our caring and compassionate nature, we will continue to do everything we can, within the limit of our meagre resources, to extend assistance to fellow members of the human family who are in dire need of humanitarian relief.

On international peace and security, the Charter of the United Nations states that the Organization was created "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war", and yet peace continues to elude us, especially in some parts of Africa, as well as in other parts of the world. There are continuing reports of raging conflicts, gross human rights violations, extra-judicial killings, sexual violence and arbitrary arrests and detentions.

The situation in South Sudan, in particular, continues to be a cause for grave concern. The country is virtually on a precipice. The people of that country have yet to enjoy the peace that the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan of August 2015 was widely expected to deliver. We therefore appeal to the Intergovernmental Authority on Development countries, as the main guarantors of the Agreement, to constructively engage the leaders and political stakeholders in South Sudan, with a view to getting them to unconditionally commit to the full and effective implementation of the Agreement.

On Syria, the political, security and humanitarian situation there remains catastrophic. Botswana is on record as having consistently expressed disappointment at the Security Council's failure to take decisive action on the situation in Syria. That failure is due to the fact that some permanent members of the Council have, from time to time, vetoed resolutions that were aimed at addressing the political and humanitarian crisis in the country.

In view of that unfortunate scenario, Botswana believes that the international community should always resort to using the moral power and authority of the General Assembly whenever there is paralysis in the Security Council. We also fully support the referral of the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court, in order for those responsible for committing war crimes and crimes against humanity to be held accountable for their actions.

Botswana is deeply concerned about the unrelenting and blatant contravention of international law and United Nations resolutions by North Korea through its continued testing of ballistic missiles. Those despicable acts by North Korea pose a threat, not only to the Korean peninsula, but throughout the Pacific region and the world at large. It is obvious to us, as it should

be to everyone else, that North Korea is being assisted by others in its development of missiles and nuclear technology. They are, therefore, as much to blame for those missile and nuclear tests as North Korea itself is.

We therefore appeal to the international community to work in unison and take prompt and decisive action that will force North Korea to adhere to the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter. Inaction is not an option in the face of such adversity. Regime change must be brought about in order to remove, once and for all, the everlasting threat to peace in that region and give the North Korean people hope for a life of freedom and prosperity.

On Western Sahara, it is reprehensible that that territory remains the only non-self-governing territory on the African continent. We therefore reiterate our support for and solidarity with the people of Western Sahara in the pursuit of their just and inalienable right to self-determination. We strongly feel that it is high time that they be allowed to exercise that right through an independent and impartial vote under the supervision of the United Nations. The Sahrawi have waited long enough for that to happen. We similarly support the people of Palestine in their legitimate struggle for sovereignty and independent statehood. As a gesture of our support and solidarity, I am pleased to report that Botswana established diplomatic relations with the State of Palestine on 8 March.

Botswana strongly condemns terrorism, violent extremism and racial intolerance in all their forms and manifestations. In that regard, it is deeply regrettable that we have recently witnessed a spate of terrorist attacks on innocent people and Governments around the world. I wish to state that we stand firmly in solidarity with the Governments and the peoples of the countries concerned and extend our deepest sympathy to them. We need to be constantly mindful of the fact that no single country is immune to terrorist attacks. Those attacks are a stark reminder of the ferocious nature of terrorism. The international community must, therefore, urgently take concerted action to resolutely fight that scourge.

Botswana fully supports the international community's efforts towards nuclear disarmament. We also reaffirm our commitment to international instruments that ban weapons of mass destruction, such as the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and the Biological Weapons Convention. In that regard, we welcome the recent adoption by the General Assembly of a legally binding treaty to prohibit the production of nuclear weapons. We are fully convinced that only a nuclear-free world will guarantee a safer future for our populations.

Botswana greatly values the opportunity it was given to contribute to the promotion and protection of human rights through its membership in the Human Rights Council for two consecutive terms. With the imminent end of our tenure in the Council in December, I wish to reaffirm that we will continue to work earnestly with the international community to advance the global human rights agenda and so that all the people of the world can live in democracies where human rights and the rule of law are upheld. Our advocacy on human rights is premised on the firm belief that society's aspirations for sustainable development will remain a mirage unless we redouble our collective efforts towards equality and human dignity.

In conclusion, I would like to urge everyone to maintain the momentum on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Let us summon our collective wisdom and strength, coupled with our singularity of purpose, to deliver real change for the benefit of the peoples we represent. Botswana pledges to be an active and reliable partner in the common endeavour to create a better and safer world of shared prosperity, where no people, no region and no country will feel left behind. That is the best legacy we can collectively bequeath to posterity.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Vice-President of the Republic of Botswana for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Mokgweetsi Eric Masisi, Vice-President of the Republic of Botswana, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by His Excellency Mr. Andrej Plenković, Prime Minister of the Republic of Croatia

Mr. Andrey Plenković, Prime Minister of the Republic of Croatia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Andrey Plenković, Prime Minister

of the Republic of Croatia, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Plenković (Croatia) (*spoke in English*): Let me take this opportunity to offer my sincere condolences to all those affected by the destruction wrought by Hurricanes Irma and Maria and to the people of Mexico, who have been hit by successive earthquakes in past few days.

Twenty-five years ago, my country's first President, Franjo Tuđman, addressed the General Assembly as Croatia was being admitted to the United Nations (see A/47/PV.7), which brought us back into the fold of free nations. At that time, he appealed to the international community to help end the aggression against Croatia and establish lasting peace. Since then, my country has been rebuilt, modernized and profoundly transformed and has become one of Europe's top tourist destinations. Today Croatia is a State member of the European Union and NATO. Building on its unique historical circumstances, we are now actively participating in peacekeeping operations around the globe and providing development aid to societies in need.

I address the Assembly as the Prime Minister of a country that in that relatively short time has served on the Security Council, presided over the Economic and Social Council and chaired the Peacebuilding Commission, and which is currently a member of the Human Rights Council.

Today we celebrate the International Day of Peace. I would like to reiterate that, as a peace-loving nation — as symbolized here at the United Nations by the recently restored *Peace Monument* by our great sculptor, Antun Augustinčić — Croatia is a strong advocate of a rules-based international order. At the national and global levels, we believe that institutions need to be more open to the public and genuinely involve people in their decision-making. It is only through an active and informed citizenry that we can make Governments accountable and create credible institutions.

Only well-functioning institutions ensure the implementation of the rule of law. Such citizen involvement brings about a welcome mix of representative and participatory democracy by bringing forward substantiated arguments and avoiding superficial and misleading populism. Croatia places great emphasis on peace, justice and strong institutions as one of the 17 goals to transform our world.

Our own experiences in building State institutions were a particular challenge for a country that achieved peace and re-established its territorial integrity only 20 years ago. Croatia is dedicated to assisting others in post-conflict transitions with its own experiences in reconciliation and confidence-building.

We were a recipient of international security assistance, including through several United Nations missions. One of the most successful peacekeeping missions to date was the United Nations Transitional Administration in Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium, which ended in January 1998 with the peaceful reintegration of our formerly occupied territories. We put at the world's disposal that unique know-how and extensive expertise as a useful complementary contribution to the international community's efforts in similar situations, such as with the implementation of the Minsk agreements in Ukraine, where we can draw many parallels.

Discussing strong international organizations globally also means addressing the strength of this institution — the United Nations. As the world changes, our firm belief is that the United Nations must also keep up and change. Croatia supports the Secretary-General's drive to reform the Secretariat, especially in peacekeeping and development. The Secretary-General's surge in diplomacy is also a much-needed development.

Security Council reform is central to United Nations reform. It is vital that its membership — both permanent and non-permanent — be regionally balanced and more reflective of the world 70 years into the Organization's life. In particular, we believe that the path to achieving that goal would be expedited by enlarging both categories of membership, including by ensuring that the Group of Eastern European States is better represented in the Security Council's non-permanent membership.

One of the effects of globalization is that the world is faced with an unprecedented number of people on the move. Refugee crises and mass migration are a reality. One in 30 people around the world is a migrant. Croatia has faced acute refugee and migrant crises in the past. The approach we took — and will always take — was one that put people first. In the context of the upcoming negotiations on the global compact on migration, we advocate an approach to human mobility that prioritizes the safety, dignity and the human rights

and fundamental freedoms of all migrants, no matter where they come from or where they are headed.

As with all global challenges, a holistic approach is required in that regard. We therefore need to work together to fight the root causes of mass migrations — be it poverty, failing States and wars or climate change and natural disasters — while standing against exploitation and abuse in the context of human trafficking and people smuggling. In the framework of the European Union, Croatia is working with its partners on stemming the illegal flows of people, especially from the Eastern Mediterranean-Balkan route, while at the same time providing concrete support to countries of origin to address root causes, in particular through its development aid programmes.

In addressing crises across the globe, our focus should be on early warning, prevention and diplomacy. Any post-conflict measure comes too late, especially in terms of human life. Conflicts need to be dealt with on a case-by-case basis and require tailor-made approaches. While a consistent approach to conflicts by the United Nations, and in particular by the Security Council, is essential for the Organization's credibility, copy-pasted, one-size-fits-all approaches are not the most effective way to proceed.

In understanding the situation and risks on the ground, we must in particular draw on the knowledge and experience of local populations, neighbouring countries and regional organizations. Croatia believes that when addressing conflicts and crises — be it in Syria, Libya, Iraq, Yemen or anywhere else in the world — it is important to have a global, comprehensive approach based on solidarity and coordinated international effort under strong United Nations leadership. Such an approach would include political, humanitarian, socioeconomic, stabilization and security elements, and in which reconstruction goes hand in hand with reconciliation and building resilience.

Our contribution to peacekeeping operations will continue to be an important component of our foreign policy, both through direct participation and sharing our experiences and expertise or know-how. Croatia has contributed to 19 United Nations peacekeeping operations to date, and we are currently preparing our contribution to United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon. Like many other countries, apart from United Nations peacekeeping operations, we also participate in international operations led by other organizations, such as the European Union, NATO and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

Human rights and fundamental freedoms are universal values. We should spare no effort in their promotion and protection. Any violation of human rights requires an immediate and appropriate response. We advocate tighter links between the Human Rights Council and the Security Council. We also acknowledge the importance of the principle of the responsibility to protect. We take particular pride in the fact that one of Croatia's top diplomats leads the United Nations efforts in that regard.

We welcome the establishment of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, as it is evident that there is a real need for strategic coordination and leadership for our global counter-terrorism efforts. It is also necessary that we continue working on preventing and countering radicalization and violent extremism.

Croatia fully supports the recent unanimous Security Council action on North Korea, whose actions represent a direct threat to international peace and security. We appeal to the North Korean authorities to discontinue developing and testing nuclear weapons and to fully meet their commitments under international law, the relevant to the Security Council resolutions and the global non-proliferation regime.

Adherence to the standards, principles and rules of international law and their faithful implementation provide a firm foundation for lasting peace and stability worldwide, to which we are deeply attached. In that regard, I would particularly like to recall the principles of good faith and free consent. We believe that disputes should be resolved through peaceful means and in conformity with international law.

It is of the utmost importance that all international adjudications meet the highest legal standards and fully respect their own relevant rules. Compromising the impartiality or independence of international adjudicators or tribunals, as was the case in the terminated arbitration process between Croatia and Slovenia, makes their decisions legally void — and left Croatia with no choice other than to withdraw from the arbitration process.

We consider that that example of undermining the rule of law is a discouragement for States considering third-party dispute settlement. At the same time, we want to solve the open border issue with our

neighbouring friend and ally Slovenia through bilateral dialogue. In addition, Croatia strongly supports the full and unequivocal implementation of all applicable rules of international humanitarian and criminal law, as well as the full investigation and punishment of all atrocities.

Preserving peace and stability in South-East Europe is obviously of key importance for my country. While the world faces many overwhelming challenges, we should bear in mind that regional stability in South-East Europe is still to be entrenched. By transferring our knowledge and promoting the integration of the countries of South-East Europe into the European Union and NATO — if they so wish — Croatia actively encourages stability in the region.

We believe in building strong societies in our neighbourhood, while aiming to shift away from containing crises towards prevention, political dialogue and active engagement. That is especially important in neighbouring Bosnia and Herzegovina, where the proper implementation of the constitutional equality of its three constituent peoples — Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats — is a prerequisite for ensuring the full functionality and stability of the State and its European integration process, which we wholeheartedly support.

Two years ago, through the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the international community properly recognized the limits to the reach of individual Governments. Universal challenges indeed demand our joint response. In addition, cooperation with academia, the business community and civil society is indispensable, but it would be unwise not to also tap the ideas and ingenuity of each individual in our respective societies, especially of our youth, who, in the age of modern technology, are absorbing knowledge and acquiring skills in a faster and more open manner. It is therefore our global task to adjust our educational systems to form future responsible citizens, to give them job opportunities and fit the real needs of our labour markets. Coming from Croatia, the homeland of the great inventor Nikola Tesla, I cannot but stress how vitally important it is that the United Nations facilitate a transformation towards the age of the digital economy and narrow the digital divide, which could generate new inequalities.

Eradicating poverty remains our primary development objective, since it is a cause and consequence of conflict, instability and crises. But it is only by paying equal attention to transformational, cross-cutting elements — such as human rights, equality, good governance, the rule of law and inclusive societies — that we will be able to achieve true sustainable development.

As we are witnessing the daily erosion of climate conditions and increasing natural disasters, more is required from humankind. That burden is ours to bear. In recent months, unfortunately, my country was not spared wildfires and floods either, which reached unprecedented dimensions. Those increasingly worrying warnings are a call to action, without delay. Croatia has already demonstrated its dedication to global efforts to preserve the environment by ratifying the Paris Agreement. Two days ago I expressed our principled support to the new French initiative — the Global Pact for the Environment — aimed at better coordinating global action against climate change.

In the context of sustainable development, synergies among global, national and local policies need to be strengthened. We believe that next year's High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development will offer a platform to discuss efficient measures for a true transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies, such as the pivotal goal of making cities and human settlements inclusive and safe, while granting their inhabitants a proper quality of life.

Croatia's commitment to multilateralism is unwavering. We believe in the United Nations system and our joint potential to promote effective, inclusive and sustainable global governance based on the rules and principles of international law. It is with that aspiration in mind that Croatia joined the United Nations 25 years ago. A quarter of a century later, I stand before the Assembly with the same noble ambitions and responsibility for respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms, democracy and economic betterment, for solidarity with humans living in precarious conditions and for common issues concerning our planet. Only with joint vigour to that end can we advance and materialize our professed common goals and values. It is incumbent upon us to do so, and the time is now.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Croatia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Andrej Plenković, Prime Minister of Croatia, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of Canada.

Mr. Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Trudeau (Canada): Before I begin, in the light of Tuesday's earthquake in Mexico, I would like to offer Canada's condolences to all families and friends in mourning. We wish a speedy recovery for all those who were injured and thank all first responders for their tireless efforts to help keep people safe. Our thoughts are also with our friends in the Caribbean, who continue to suffer from devastating hurricanes. The generosity and resilience that millions have shown in the face of those natural disasters is an inspiration to the world. Canada stands ready to lend a helping hand whenever we can.

It is an honour to be back here at the General Assembly today and to have an opportunity to speak to this year's theme, namely, "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet".

(*spoke in French*)

People. Peace. A good quality of life and an environment that we take care of. Equality for all, no matter where. That is what counts in the eyes of Canadians. Throughout our history, we have worked tirelessly to realize our ambitions both at home and elsewhere in the world. Today I would like to speak about the difficult lessons that Canada has learned along the way. Canada is not a wonderland where the difficulties experienced by others do not exist. We face the same challenges. Canada is continually evolving.

(*spoke in English*)

Canada remains a work in progress. I want to tell the Assembly about the Canadian experience because, for all the mistakes we have made, we remain hopeful — hopeful that we can do better, and be better, and treat each other with the dignity and the respect that is the birthright of every human being. I want to tell the Assembly our story because I know that the challenges we have faced, and continue to face, are not unique in the world, nor are the solutions. An approach that values human dignity and emphasizes fairness and real opportunity for everyone has a home in Canada and in every country. It is an approach that does not just serve domestic needs but makes the world a better, more peaceful, more prosperous place for all.

Mr. Llorenty Soliz (Plurinational State of Bolivia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

This year Canada celebrates the 150th anniversary of out Confederation. But Canada is much older than that. It has been home to the descendants of settlers and immigrants for hundreds of years, and indigenous peoples for millenniums. We are a country that is built on different cultures, different religions and different languages all coming together. Such diversity has become our great strength.

But that is not, and has not always been, true for everyone who shares our land. Canada is built on the ancestral land of indigenous peoples, but, regrettably, it is also a country that came into being without the meaningful participation of those who were there first. Even treaties that were developed to provide a foundation for proper relations have not been fully honoured or implemented. For First Nations, Métis Nation and Inuit peoples in Canada, those early colonial relationships were not about strength through diversity or a celebration of our differences. For indigenous peoples in Canada, their experience was mostly one of humiliation, neglect and abuse.

(*spoke in French*)

They were victims of a Government that did not respect them; their traditions, their assets, their way of governing or their laws. It chose to deny and undermine their rights and their dignity. They were victims of a Government that sought to rewrite their unique history and eradicate their languages and cultures by imposing colonial traditions and their own way of life. They were victims of a Government that refused to protect their lands and waters and that rejected their principle of always thinking seven generations ahead.

In short, we rejected the very idea of entire generations of indigenous peoples defining their own lives with the dignity and pride they are due. We have deprived Canada of the significant contributions that those generations could have made to the progression of our great country. The inability of successive Canadian Governments to respect the rights of indigenous

peoples in Canada causes us great shame. For too many indigenous peoples, that lack of respect for their rights persists today.

(*spoke in English*)

Today there are still children living on reserves in Canada who cannot safely drink, bathe in or even play in the water that comes out of their taps. There are indigenous parents who say goodnight to their children and have to cross their fingers in the hope that their kids will not run away or take their own lives in the night. Young indigenous people in Canada struggle to get a good education. Although residential schools are thankfully a thing of the past, too many indigenous youth are still sent away, far from their families, just to get the basic education most Canadians take for granted. For far too many indigenous women, life in Canada includes threats of violence so frequent and severe that Amnesty International has called it a human rights crisis.

That is the legacy of colonialism in Canada, of a paternalistic Indian Act, of the forced relocation of Inuit and First Nations communities and a systematic denial of Métis rights and history, of residential schools that separated children as young as 5 years old from their families, punished them for speaking their own language and sought to extinguish indigenous cultures entirely.

The good news is that Canadians get it. They see the inequities, and they are fed up with the excuses. And that impatience gives us a rare and precious opportunity to act. We now have before us an opportunity to deliver true, meaningful and lasting reconciliation between Canada and First Nations, the Métis Nation, and Inuit peoples.

(*spoke in French*)

At a time where we seek to reconcile, we should be guided by the basic standards adopted in this Hall 10 years ago this month. I know that in the past Canada's position on the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was disappointing. We actively campaigned and voted against such rights, only to finally accept them reluctantly by saying that it was simply a document of aspirations. However, they are not aspirations. The Declaration is very concrete for indigenous peoples and for those who who worked long and hard to make that document a reality.

(*spoke in English*)

In the words of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, the Declaration provides the necessary principles, norms and standards for reconciliation to flourish in twenty-first-century Canada. That is not an aspiration, that is a way forward. Last year, at the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, Canada's then Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs finally corrected Canada's position on the Declaration, and announced that we are now, without qualification, a full supporter of the Declaration.

In partnership with indigenous peoples, we are moving ahead with a thorough review of federal laws, policies and operational practices to get our house in order and make sure that our Government is meeting its obligations, including international obligations under the Declaration. We know that the world expects Canada to strictly adhere to international human rights standards — including the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples — and that *is* what we expect of ourselves too.

We are working closely with indigenous peoples in Canada to better respond to their priorities, to better understand how they see and define self-determination and to support their work of nation rebuilding. Along with indigenous partners, we are co-developing programmes to ensure the preservation, protection and revitalization of Métis, Inuit and First Nations languages. In short, we have been working hard, in partnership with other orders of Government and with indigenous leaders in Canada, to correct past injustices and to bring about a better quality of life for indigenous peoples in Canada.

I will give a few examples. Many will sound familiar because they are closely aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) — goals that apply to all of our countries without exception. Our efforts include investments to help bring safe and clean drinking water to all indigenous communities, part of Sustainable Development Goal 6, on clean water and sanitation. So far, more than two dozen long-term drinking-water advisories in indigenous communities have been eliminated, and we have a plan to bring to an end those that remain.

(*spoke in French*)

Those efforts take the form of new investments to eliminate gaps in the education of First Nations. The new agreements recognize the power and authority of First Nations. They also consider ways to create and manage educational systems that are managed within the communities, by the communities and for the communities. Those important notions are in line with Sustainable Development Goal 4, on quality education.

For many indigenous peoples in Canada, among other things, those investments will enable laying the foundation for reaching Sustainable Development Goal 8, on decent work and economic growth. We know that no one can hope to have a true and equal chance of succeeding without good health, a solid community, a well-paid quality job, quality education and safe and affordable housing. Of course, that also applies to indigenous peoples.

(*spoke in English*)

That is why our efforts include working with indigenous communities to help build and refurbish homes. Construction work on nearly 4,000 homes has been completed or is under way, helping to fulfil SDG 11, on making communities safe and sustainable places to live. And across the country, we are also working on a national housing strategy to give more Canadians access to housing that is safe, affordable and adequate.

Our efforts also include a sharper focus on indigenous communities across Canada and around the world as it relates to SDG 5, on combating gender-based violence and giving women and girls equal opportunities to succeed. We need women and girls to succeed because that is how we grow stronger economies and build stronger communities. That is why our Government will be moving forward shortly with legislation to ensure equal pay for work of equal value.

The Sustainable Development Goals are as meaningful in Canada as they are everywhere else in the world. We are committed to implementing them at home, while we also work with our international partners to achieve them around the world. That is important, because poverty and hunger know no borders. We cannot pretend that those solvable challenges happen only on distant shores. The need for greater equality and decent work are real and persistent human needs — ones we cannot afford to ignore, especially in our own countries.

(*spoke in French*)

It is up to each of us to ensure that all of us, including indigenous peoples, have better opportunities. It is our responsibility to ensure that true equality is unconditional. Equality applies to us all, regardless of our gender, origin, beliefs or the person we choose to love. It is our responsibility to take better care of the environment that we all share. As I said here at the signing ceremony of the Paris Agreement, we are all implicated, in all senses of the word. We are all responsible, and our new ways of doing things must take that into account.

(*spoke in English*)

In Canada that means new relationships between the Government of Canada and indigenous peoples — relationships based on recognition of rights, respect, cooperation and partnership. We recently made changes to our Government structures to help with the transition to those new relationships with indigenous peoples. We are dismantling the old colonial bureaucratic structures and creating a new Department of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs, led by Carolyn Bennett, an experienced and effective advocate for indigenous peoples in Canada. In her new role, she will lead our Government's efforts to better support indigenous peoples as they strengthen their distinct political, cultural, legal and economic institutions and assume autonomy over their own affairs, including the recognition and implementation of self-government as an expression of self-determination.

At the same time, we recognize that in Canada the federal Government has a historic responsibility for providing services to indigenous peoples and an ongoing role to play. To better do that work while at the same time supporting indigenous self-determination, in consultation with indigenous peoples, we will create a new Department of Indigenous Services, led by our former Minister of Health, Jane Philpott. Over time, programmes and services will increasingly be delivered by indigenous peoples, as part of their move towards true self-government and the full implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

(*spoke in French*)

We believe that this separation is the best way for Canada to meet its sustainable development commitments, while following the principle of self-

determination, which is at the heart of the Declaration. We are in uncharted territory. No one has paved the way for us, but we cannot wait. The time has come to take our own journey together. The time has come to think outside the box, to move away from the limits imposed by old outdated colonial structures and to make room for innovation and structures that respect the inherent rights of indigenous peoples to govern themselves and to determine their own future.

(*spoke in English*)

For the federal Government, that means making changes to how we operate. The departmental change I mentioned is part of fulfilling that responsibility. For indigenous peoples, it means taking a hard look at how they define and govern themselves as nations and Governments, and how they seek to relate to other orders of Government. Indigenous peoples will decide how they wish to represent and organize themselves. Some may choose to engage with our Government based on historic nations and treaties, others will use different shared experiences as the basis for coming together. The choice is theirs. That is precisely what self-determination demands.

Although that path is uncharted, I am confident that we will reach a place of reconciliation, that we will reach a place as a country where nation-to-nation, Government-to-Government and Inuit-Crown relationships can be transformed — a place where the standards enshrined in the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples are fully realized not merely by Government mandate, but in true partnership with indigenous peoples.

Part of that new partnership will involve addressing the shared challenge of climate change. Indigenous and northern communities are particularly affected by its stark reality. In communities across the north — places like Paulatuk, Kugluktuk, and Tuktoyaktuk — community members are finding sea ice conditions more dangerous and unpredictable for travelling and hunting in the winter. In Canada's western Arctic, the permafrost is melting and huge pieces of tundra are eroding into the ocean. Around Baffin Island, Inuit elders are finding it difficult to forecast the weather like they used to, so difficult that many are now reluctant to even try.

At home, we are working hard to help those communities adapt and prepare for the future. At the international level, our commitment is unwavering. There is no country on the planet that can walk away from the challenge and reality of climate change. For our part, Canada will continue to fight for the global plan that has a realistic chance of countering it. We have a responsibility to future generations, and we will uphold it.

We have a chance to build in Canada and around the world economies that are clean, that are growing, that are forward-looking. We will not let that opportunity pass us by.

(*spoke in French*)

In Canada that means imposing a tariff on carbon-related pollution. When that is done properly, it is the most effective way of reducing emissions while continuing to grow the economy. It also means continuing to work with other countries to bring us closer to the goals we have set for ourselves. Last week in Montreal, we welcomed environment leaders from over 30 countries to participate in a working meeting. It was an opportunity for us to discuss the various ways of implementing the Paris Agreement and to maintain the international momentum towards a more sustainable future for all.

(*spoke in English*)

Likewise, the global community has a responsibility to do all that it can to reduce inequality within and among countries. In Canada we are working hard to achieve that goal. We improved child benefit payments. Our new programme gives nine out of 10 families more money to help with the high cost of raising their kids, and because of that we expect to reduce child poverty in Canada by 40 per cent. We raised taxes on the wealthiest 1 per cent so that we could lower them for the middle class, and we are continuing to look for ways to make our tax system more fair. Right now we have a system that encourages wealthy Canadians to use private corporations to pay a lower tax rate than middle-class Canadians. That is not fair, and we are going to fix it.

(*spoke in French*)

We are investing to make education more affordable and accessible so that every Canadian can get the training needed to find and keep a good, well-paying job. That is particularly important at a time when automation is challenging the traditional definition of work.

At the international level, we have reaffirmed Canada's commitment to reducing poverty and injustice, while also putting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls at the heart of our development efforts. We have adopted that approach because we know that supporting women and girls leads to economic growth, and that peace and cooperation can then take root. Families and communities can then hope for a better quality of life.

(*spoke in English*)

We are also working hard to deliver progressive trade agreements such as the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) with the European Union, which comes into effect today. CETA will expand opportunities for businesses, create good, well-paying jobs for workers and deliver meaningful economic growth — the kind of growth that benefits all our citizens, not just the wealthiest. We have the opportunity — and I would argue that we have the responsibility — to ensure that trade agreements include strong provisions to safeguard workers' rights, to protect the environment and to ensure that the benefits of trade are felt more broadly. When we do that, we do not just grow our economies, we live up to our values. We say to ourselves and to one another that good enough just is not good enough, and that better is always possible.

(*spoke in French*)

It is always possible to do better when people are at the heart of the decisions we make. People, as the theme of this general debate reminds us, are the key to building a peaceful and prosperous future. It is a future that we all want for ourselves, for our children and for our grandchildren. It is a future in which indigenous people in Canada and around the world have the right to participate as equal partners. It is a future that we can build if we work together.

(*spoke in English*)

Our efforts to build a better relationship with indigenous peoples in Canada are not only about righting historical wrongs. They are about listening, learning and working together. They are also about concrete actions for the future. The reconciliation that we seek holds lessons for us all.

We cannot build strong relationships if we refuse to have conversations. We cannot chart a more peaceful path if the starting point is suspicion and mistrust. And we cannot build a better world unless we work together, respect our differences, protect the vulnerable and stand up for the things that matter most. As I said last year (see A/71/PV.8), I know that it will be hard work. But I remain confident — for Canada's experience shows it to be true — that any challenge can be met if we meet it together.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Canada for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa.

Mr. Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Malielegaoi (Samoa): Samoa warmly welcomes the assumption of Mr. Miroslav Lajčák to the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session, at a time when our Organization is going through unprecedentedly volatile and difficult times. We look forward to his leadership so that together we can chart a safer, more predictable and more humane pathway in our journey through life's uncharted waters. He can count on Samoa's support as we work in partnership to translate into tangible and measurable achievements the overarching theme of his tenure, "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet".

The President's predecessor, Ambassador Peter Thomson of Fiji, demonstrated strong leadership during his successful presidency. We wish him well in his new calling.

Secretary-General Guterres is passionate about, and committed to, turning the United Nations into an efficient and effective Organization that is fit for purpose and readily responsive to the needs of the very peoples it was established to serve in the first place. In working to make the focus of the United Nations more people-centred than process-centred, Samoa assures the Secretary-General of its full support.

This week's annual general debate is the twentieth successive general debate of the General Assembly that I have attended and addressed. My continuous participation is a measure of my conviction and my Government's unqualified faith in the value of the United Nations and the endless potential that it holds to deal successfully with any issue of diversity and gravity that it confronts. The United Nations remains our choice of last resort and hope to provide the political will and the necessary commitment to address our challenges. That is why we want it to remain relevant and adaptable to changing circumstances. It must be able to respond effectively to the current and emerging challenges that our world faces.

We meet against the backdrop of a world plagued by uncertainty and a sense of ebbing hope. We are losing the fight to free our world from poverty and instability. Conflicts abound, and we are no longer distanced or disconnected from deadly acts of terrorism and the devastation of natural and human-induced disasters. We are living in an environment of risk. Climate change is an existential threat. Allow me to pause and offer our sincere condolences to the Governments and the peoples of all the countries that have suffered from the recent devastation of hurricanes and earthquakes.

We cannot help but watch with trepidation and uneasiness the global dynamics that are nudging our world perilously close to a potential catastrophe of unimaginable proportions. As small island Pacific countries, we are no longer protected by our isolation. We are bystanders, but we have the most to lose in the unfolding power drama being played out on the Korean peninsula. We pray for visionary leadership with sound moral judgment on both sides in order to ensure that we give peace a chance.

That explains why I signed the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons yesterday on Samoa's behalf. As a signatory to that historic Treaty, we wanted to demonstrate unequivocally our aspiration for a world without nuclear weapons. The conventional narrative that the possession of nuclear weapons will act as deterrent to make the world a safer place to live has not been borne out by the current realities. Otherwise, the developments on the Korean peninsula would not have happened at all. We firmly believe that possessing nuclear weapons and adding new nuclear Powers only make our world less safe, less secure and less peaceful, hence the need to rid our world completely of all nuclear weapons.

No matter how noble a goal lies behind having such arsenals, allowing them to fall into the wrong and unprincipled hands is a recipe for doom and mayhem, because people, after all, are human and mere mortals. But all is not yet lost. The adoption of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, which offers a united approach to addressing the plight of the world's displaced peoples, the creation of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, which is aimed at enhancing the Organization's capability to assist Member States in implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, and the historic, first-ever Treaty banning nuclear weapons are all positive developments moving forward.

Like other global challenges, climate change transcends borders without leaving a trace. It has no respect for sovereignty and does not discriminate between rich and poor countries. Its dire consequences are real, including for those who remain in denial. Climate change is a perpetual priority issue for my country and our Pacific region. In our small islands, as we witnessed recently, natural catastrophes can decimate an entire country, bringing with them great pain and upheaval to peoples' lives, as well as set back the national economy for years. We know that from repeated past experience. Our islands' limited resources and lack of adaptive capacity make the burden of rehabilitation a mammoth undertaking. While we applaud the resilience of our people to bounce back from major natural disasters, the scars of those natural phenomena take years to heal and recover from. If it is any consolation to our island States, even some of the well-resourced developed countries continue to try to recover from and overcome the impact of catastrophes that devastated their economies.

Samoa remains committed to ongoing efforts to pursue respect for human rights and the rule of law, and does its part to contribute to that global effort. For the first time ever, at Samoa's invitation, a United Nations human rights expert group visited last month to carry out a fact-finding mission to assess the progress made towards eliminating discrimination against women and towards protecting and promoting women's rights in the country. Samoa is the first Pacific country to open its doors to that independent mechanism.

We continue to place great faith in the rule of law and the vital protection it offers to all States, especially to weak and small countries like mine without any armed forces or affiliation to any military grouping. The International Criminal Court (ICC) is an important part of the architecture of world peace based on the rule of law. We call for the early activation of the Kampala Amendments. The ICC was represented at the Pacific Islands Forum Special Leaders' Retreat held earlier this month in Samoa.

Terrorism is an offence to humankind and runs contrary to the core values of the United Nations. For Samoa, I reaffirm our strong support for the relevant Security Council resolutions against terrorism, which send a clear signal of our determination to suppress terrorist activities, including training, international recruiting and financing. Samoa continues to align its domestic policies and legislation to meeting its international obligations to help combat terrorism, as well as to participate actively in Pacific regional security initiatives.

In the context of peacekeeping, Samoa's unwavering support for United Nations peacekeeping work is underscored by 17 years of uninterrupted police deployment serving in missions in Liberia, the Sudan, Timor-Leste and South Sudan. Although we are a small country, Samoan police officers continue to serve side by side with officers from other countries in places that require the intervention of the United Nations. Our commitment is rooted in our firm belief in the role that United Nations peacekeeping plays in helping eliminate the causes of conflict and in bringing about peace and stability. We fully endorse the condemnation of sexual exploitation and abuse in peacekeeping, which is why we signed the international compact initiative of the Secretary-General to committing countries to eliminating those heinous acts in peacekeeping.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provides our framework to put the world on a path towards a sustainable and resilient future for the people, the planet and prosperity. Although the 2030 Agenda remains a high priority on the global agenda and we see signs of momentum in terms of its implementation, much work remains to be done. The need to accelerate global action on, and awareness of, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) remains. The adoption of the Pacific regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific complements Samoa's road map based on an integrated approach involving the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) Accelerated Modalities of Action, known as the Samoa Pathway, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the Framework for Pacific Regionalism, which are aligned with our national development strategy.

For small island developing States, the Samoa Pathway is their sustainable development road map, which highlights their key tasks and priorities, and is closely linked to the 2030 Agenda. As we approach the five-year review of the Samoa Pathway in 2019, it is important to ensure that the comprehensive review of United Nations support for SIDS is properly addressed and implemented. We need to study closely lessons learned from the partnerships registered for SIDS and encourage proactive follow-up, as well as pursue new partnerships for the group's sustainable development.

Since the last annual global multi-stakeholder small island developing States partnership dialogue, several partnerships and voluntary commitments specific to small island developing States were launched during the Ocean Conference. Prior to the mid-term review of the SIDS outcome document, it is important that we look at ways of improving implementation and addressing gaps and emerging issues. The success of the Ocean Conference was crucial to building momentum in the implementation of the SDGs, given that the ocean is the lifeblood of the planet. Addressing the targets of SDG 14 for SIDS is catalytic to implementing several, if not all, of the 17 Goals.

With the new Blue Pacific concept for the Pacific region, and the concrete outcomes from the Conference, emphasis will be placed on implementation. At the Ocean Conference, Samoa pledged 13 voluntary commitments that showcased national efforts aimed at the conservation, management and sustainable use

of the ocean and its resources and the engagement of communities.

During the Ocean Conference in June, I was appointed the Special Ambassador of the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development by the United Nations World Tourism Organization. The year 2017 is a crucial one for sustainable tourism. Given the reliance of many of our small economies on tourism and the role it can play in SDG implementation, we will continue to promote the role of tourism in support of peaceful societies and sustainable development.

Let me now turn to the regional context and share with the Assembly some of the decisions taken by the leaders of our Pacific Islands Forum at their forty-eighth Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Meeting, which my country was privileged to host at the beginning of the month. For our year-long chairmanship we chose the theme "The Blue Pacific. Our sea of islands — Our security through sustainable development, management and conservation".

We in Samoa reaffirmed the Framework for Pacific Regionalism to drive our region's policy agenda towards the realization of our vision, that of a region of peace, harmony, security, social inclusion and prosperity, so as to enable all Pacific people to lead free, healthy and productive lives.

We also endorsed the Blue Pacific identity as the core driver of collective action for advancing the leaders' vision under the Framework for Pacific Regionalism. This new narrative calls for inspired leadership and a long-term Pacific Islands Forum foreign policy commitment to act as one for the good of all rather than a few. The Blue Pacific identity reinforces the potential of our shared stewardship of the Pacific Ocean, based on the explicit recognition of our shared ocean identity, ocean geography and ocean resources. It aims to strengthen collective action by putting the Blue Pacific at the centre of regional policymaking and united action for advancing the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders' vision for the region.

We discussed the key priorities for our region with other Pacific leaders, a few of which I will highlight, as their implementation requires collective and urgent action from this gathering of the United Nations.

First, climate change remains a priority challenge for the Pacific region because of its existential nature and its security implications. Climate change is already happening; it cannot be washed away by the rising tides. It has significant security implications. Its impact threatens the continued existence and viability as sovereign States of some of our low-lying atolls. Even countries that have been in self-denial with regard to the phenomenon of climate change, must surely now accept the weight of scientific evidence.

The implementation of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change is of high priority and requires collective action to address this existential threat. We are confident that Fiji's presidency of the twenty-third Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change will focus the spotlight on challenges and the need for genuine partnerships to help us deliver on our nationally determined contributions as part of the implementation of the Paris Agreement. The Pacific has also endorsed its Framework for Resilience Development in the Pacific: An Integrated Approach to Address Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management and its institutional arrangements to support the elaboration and implementation of the Paris Agreement.

Secondly, the ocean and its resources continue to be critical to the livelihoods of our people and the region. The impacts of climate change, illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing and overfishing are threatening the sustainability of this crucial resource of our region. The Pacific Forum members will continue to be actively engaged on all ocean-related issues at the General Assembly at its seventy-second session, including the biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction process.

Thirdly, we adopted the Pacific Road Map for Sustainable Development and its implementation strategy. That reflects the seriousness our region places on implementing the 17 SDGs and the importance of a regional approach to meeting those international commitments. We continue to count on the important role of the United Nations and our partners to support regional and national efforts for SDG implementation, particularly the building of our capabilities. We look forward to the Secretary-General's reform and how the Forum can engage to ensure its priorities in terms of its SDG road map and the implementation of the Samoa Pathway, the Paris Agreement and other regional needs are considered in the reform.

Finally, in the context of security, the Pacific Islands Forum remains committed to collective arrangements and mechanisms to assist regional Governments

recover from national conflicts and crises. The success of thse arrangements, together with the support of the United Nations, is already evident in the positive results of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI). I am honoured to acknowledge the successful conclusion of the Mission, which brought together peacekeepers from all member countries of the Pacific Islands Forum.

Leaders acknowledged the successful conclusion of RAMSI and recognized it as a success story of regionalism and a workable example of regional cooperation and diplomacy, embodying more than a decade of partnership and cooperation among the Forum member countries. They agreed to build on the Biketawa Declaration and other Forum security-related declarations to expand the concept of security, including human security, humanitarian assistance, prioritizing environmental security and regional cooperation in building resilience to disasters and climate change.

Over the years, the Pacific has continued to call for advancing the cause of nuclear non-proliferation. Issues such as radioactive contaminants in the Republic of the Marshall Islands are of great concern to both that country and the region. We count on the promised support of the relevant United Nations entities to respond accordingly to requests for assistance, including working closely with the regional technical agencies. The United States of America is also encouraged to take urgent action to address the issue.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Miro Cerar, Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Miro Cerar, Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia.

Mr. Miro Cerar, Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President *(spoke in Spanish)*: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Miro Cerar, Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Cerar (Slovenia): At the outset, I would like to express our sympathies to Mexico and its people as they grapple with the effects of the earthquake that has resulted in so many tragic victims and ruined homes.

I would like to congratulate Mr. Miroslav Lajčák on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session and to wish him every success in discharging his duties. He can count on Slovenia's full support. I would also like to to express my gratitude to the outgoing President, Mr. Peter Thomson, for his important contribution to the work of the General Assembly over the past year. Lastly, I would also like to congratulate Mr. António Guterres on his appointment as Secretary-General. I commend his determination to promote the United Nations and its values and goals, and his tireless efforts to strengthen the Organization.

The world continues to deal with challenges to international peace and security that are ever more complex and intertwined. Shocking images of human suffering are a daily reality, the consequences of the armed conflicts, environmental degradation, famine, lack of economic opportunity, grave breaches of human rights and terrorism that are just some of those global challenges. If we are to address them, effective international cooperation, with the United Nations at its core, is essential. We have the mandate and the responsibility to act. We must stand united to address global challenges together. Despite those threats, I am encouraged by a new dynamic in the United Nations and the strong push by the Secretary-General to strengthen multilateralism and the reform agenda. I commend his determination to make the Organization stronger and more fit to serve as the bedrock of the international rules-based order. More than ever, we need a strong United Nations to be one of our key actors in providing security, stability and a life of dignity for all.

Two years ago, we achieved a milestone by agreeing on our development road map. Together, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Climate Change Agreement provide a framework and vision for a more sustainable planet in the future and prosperity for all. The true test now is their implementation. This is not the time to go back on our promises. Rather, we

need to turn them into real progress that will benefit people around the globe. Slovenia has embarked on that path with a sense of urgency. That is demonstrated, among other things, by Slovenia's high ranking in the *SDG Index and Dashboards 2017 Report*, which shows that we are in the top 10 of 157 measured countries in our achievements towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

We are strongly engaged in protecting the environment and ensuring its sustainability, and we are determined to raise awareness about the key factors shaping our sustainable future. For example, we recognize the key role that bees and other pollinators play in preventing hunger, ensuring food security, improving human health and preserving the environment and its biodiversity. In that context, we are proposing that the General Assembly declare 20 May an international day of bees and proclaim it World Bee Day. I would like to thank all of the States that have already expressed support for the initiative and encourage others to do so.

Achieving sustainable development is only possible if the global community works together in a solid partnership between Governments, international organizations, civil society, academia and the private sector. The same is true for dealing with large global migrations and refugee flows. Shared responsibility and solidarity should be the guiding principles of our global approach. In that spirit, Slovenia is constructively engaged in the consultation process for the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration and the global compact on refugees. We believe that the adoption in 2018 of both global compacts will be another major milestone in our path towards ensuring a life of dignity for all.

Without respect for human rights, there can be no peace, freedom, security or development. The United Nations has been instrumental in promoting respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms worldwide. However, let us not forget that the primary responsibility for the fulfilment of human rights lies with States. Slovenia, as a current member of the Human Rights Council, is a strong supporter of human rights. In that spirit, we continue to advocate a progressive approach to human rights issues, enhancing protection norms and standards at all levels. Our main focus is on the rights of children, support for gender equality and the empowerment of women, as well as the rights of the elderly. In that context, we also focus on the importance of intergenerational collaboration.

There is still much to be done before we can ensure a life of dignity for all without discrimination. More must also be done to mitigate harm to civilians, especially in the context of armed conflicts, and to prevent all forms of sexual violence. It is particularly despicable when people deployed to protect civilians engage in abuse. We therefore underline the need for a zero-tolerance policy on all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse.

Respect for international treaties, the decisions of international courts and tribunals and other sources of international law, as well as the abili*y to implement them, is indispensable to a functioning global community. Respect for the obligations arising from treaties and for other sources of international law is also embedded in the Charter of the United Nations, and is the very foundation of international peace and security. Moreover, it is an important guarantor of friendly relations and cooperation among States. Slovenia recognizes the essential role of the rule of law and international law and has therefore made it central to its foreign policy.

In the context of the rule of law, ending impunity for the most serious international crimes continues to be an important goal for my Government. Slovenia is committed to promoting international criminal justice, especially as it is represented by the International Criminal Court (ICC). The principles enshrined in the Charter attest to the natural partnership between the United Nations and the Court, and that relationship is expected to advance even further with the activation of the ICC's jurisdiction over the crime of aggression, which is anticipated by the end of the year. We express our strong support for swift activation of the Kampala amendments on the crime of aggression. Needless to say, the primary responsibility to prosecute atrocity crimes still rests with States. Slovenia, together with other leading States, will continue to actively pursue the improvement of the international legal framework for mutual legal assistance and extradition for domestic prosecution of the most serious international crimes.

Years of horrific war in Syria, conflicts in Afghanistan, Yemen, Iraq, Libya and Mali and dire situations such as those in South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to name just a few, remain particular sources of concern. We call on all relevant parties to refrain from the use of force and

engage in political dialogue. Violent extremism and the crimes committed by terrorist groups continue to plague the world. We must do all we can to prevent and stop such crimes, particularly by providing viable alternative opportunities for young people.

The United Nations plays a key role in countering terrorism, including the prevention of violent extremism. In that regard, Slovenia welcomed the reform of the United Nations counter-terrorism architecture, as well as resolution 71/291, designed to strengthen the ability of the United Nations system to assist Member States in implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

As a strong supporter of non-proliferation and disarmament in the area of weapons of mass destruction, Slovenia is committed to treaty-based nuclear disarmament and arms control. We firmly believe that we must work progressively to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons through full implementation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. In that regard, we strongly condemn the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's violations of Security Council resolutions and its own international commitments. They pose a serious threat to peace and security in the region and beyond. We must intensify our efforts to sustain peace everywhere, but most immediately in a wide range of fragile and conflict-affected States. Conflicts cannot be prevented or resolved by addressing the symptoms alone; we must address the underlying causes. For that we have to think long term. The United Nations can help to defuse latent conflicts. Whenever possible, we should opt for diplomacy, mediation and conflict prevention.

The emphasis must be on doing more in a collective, timely and effective manner. That can be achieved only by a strong, robust, adaptable, knowledgeable and responsible United Nations, which is why Slovenia strongly supports the Secretary-General's reform efforts. The various parts of the United Nations system must be better coordinated. Duplication must be avoided, and the common goal must be getting tangible results. I would like to conclude by assuring the Assembly that Slovenia is committed to supporting the United Nations and is determined to work with all partners to deliver tangible, meaningful results that will advance peace, security, development and human rights for all.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Miroslav Cerar, Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Sigmar Gabriel, Vice-Chancellor and Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Mr. Gabriel (Germany) (*spoke in German; interpretation provided by the delegation*): We seem to be going through a phase in which we are confronted with hurricanes and earthquakes, both political and natural, upheavals that are getting harsher and more intransigent and belligerent from day to day and from speech to speech. As responsible politicians, it is vital that we ask ourselves how we can bring about a change in direction that will lead to more peace and stability, less hunger and better prospects for everyone in the world.

How do we ensure that globalization will ultimately deliver justice for all rather than riches to the few? One answer as to how we can achieve that change in direction can be found in a report addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations. It states that we must not limit ourselves to the "traditional questions of peace and war" but must also work to overcome "world hunger, mass misery and alarming disparities between the living conditions of rich and poor". I find the analysis very apt. The painful thing about that excerpt is that it comes not from a recent report to the Secretary-General but from one that goes back nearly 40 years. Its apt analysis of the global situation can be found in *North-South: A Program for Survival*, commissioned almost 40 years ago to the day, the report of the North-South Commission, which began its work in 1977. The Chairman of the Commission was former German Chancellor Willy Brandt.

Humankind is still dealing with more or less the same structural difficulties today, but it seems to have become rather more difficult to change the world for the better. Looking around the globe today, it seems that a world view that puts one's own national interests first and which refuses to engage in a balancing of interests among the nations of the world is gaining ever more ground. National egotism, I believe, is worthless as an organizing principle for our world of the twenty-

first century. Such egotism sees the world as an arena, a battleground in which everyone is fighting against everyone else and in which everyone has to assert his or her own interests, either alone or in alliances of convenience. In this world view, it is the law of the strongest that prevails, not the strength of international law. I firmly believe that we have to rise up against this world view. We need more international cooperation and less national egotism, not the other way around.

Some 40 years ago, the North-South Commission recognized that global problems cannot be resolved through confrontation but only through often arduous efforts to compromise and identify common interests. Ultimately, no country can win if it strives only to assert its own interests. If we all did that, looking out only for our own national interests, confrontations and conflicts would increase and global prosperity would falter. The motto "Our country first" would not only lead to more national confrontations and less prosperity; in the end, we would all be the losers. As Germans, our historical experience is quite unusual. Only after two terrible world wars did we learn to see our former enemies as neighbours and partners with whom we wanted to share and shoulder responsibility for a peaceful coexistence. Only since then have our own citizens in Germany had a better life. We have learned that it was not "Germany first" that made our country strong and prosperous; rather, it was "European and international responsibility first" that gave us Germans peace and prosperity.

In international cooperation, no one loses sovereignty. Rather, we all gain a new sovereignty together that we cannot possess as nation States on our own in today's world. That is why the European Union today provides the framework for our German policies. The road has often been rocky and arduous, for nothing is more difficult than turning former enemies into friends. Often the way is not popular, and one needs considerable political courage to take it. Indeed, the call for international cooperation and for efforts to balance interests is not always popular in our own countries. However, that courage finally led to peace and prosperity in Europe after centuries of war. Today we Germans are grateful to the courageous people in France, Belgium, Luxembourg, Italy and many other countries of Europe for having the courage to befriend us — their former enemies — as new and lasting partners after the Second World War. It is precisely because of that experience in Germany and Europe that we support the work of strong, functioning collective institutions, above all the United Nations.

The urgent need for us to work together to establish a safer world has been vividly demonstrated by North Korea's current irresponsible actions, which pose a serious threat to world peace. We must send a clear message that the international community will not accept its nuclear provocations. Germany welcomes the sanctions adopted by the Security Council and calls for their speedy implementation in Europe, and we also support European initiatives calling for additional measures. At the same time, we should use all the diplomatic means at our disposal, first to defuse the situation and then to find a starting point for long-term solutions. Resolving this international crisis is crucial because if we do not, others will be encouraged to emulate North Korea. If a country can build up a nuclear arsenal while the international community stands helplessly by, other political leaders and countries will follow its example. That would bring about new nuclear crises emerging all over the world, and our children and grandchildren would grow up in a very dangerous world. That is why North Korea's acquisition of nuclear weapons is neither a bilateral nor a regional problem, but rather a global challenge that we have to overcome together.

We cannot accept the possibility that efforts to build a nuclear arsenal can be rewarded on the international stage. It is therefore more important than ever that the international architecture for arms control and disarmament does not crumble. Existing treaties and agreements must not be called into question. That applies in particular to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) for Iran's nuclear programme. The Plan is a way out of the impasse of a nuclear confrontation that would jeopardize security in the region and have an impact far beyond it. However, we can reach the level of confidence that we so urgently need only if all obligations are rigorously met and the transparency we have agreed on is established. Germany will work within the E3+3 framework to ensure that the JCPOA is strictly implemented and upheld. That is not just about Iran; it is about the credibility of the entire international community. For what State would renounce the development of its own nuclear programme if it were shown that negotiated agreements did not last and that a binding agreement with the international community was not worth the paper it was written on? How can we convince countries such as North Korea that

international agreements make them more secure and will therefore encourage them to commit to further disarmament efforts if the agreement with Iran, the sole international example of such an endeavour, is not upheld?

What the world needs most urgently now is renewed trust. With particular regard to the implementation of the ban on the proliferation of nuclear weapons, we have a request for the United States, Russia, China and every country possessing nuclear weapons. They will be instrumental to ensuring the implementation of the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and of arms control and disarmament. To that end, trust among them must be restored.

Statements by Presidents of the United States are always important and interesting, and always worth listening to and even reading after they have been delivered. I found a passage in one such statement that I especially liked. In it, the President of the United States of America called for general and complete disarmament. Every year, he said, billions of dollars were spent on weapons that were acquired for the purpose of making sure we never need to use them. That, he went on to say, was clearly not the most efficient means of ensuring peace. I have to admit that the statement dates back even further than the report of the North-South Commission. It was delivered by John F. Kennedy in 1963. We can see that everything that we need for a safer future has already been considered, written and said. I believe that today we should focus on the bold visions of the North-South Commission and President Kennedy, and have the courage to come up with new proposals for disarmament, arms control and confidence-building.

One of our tasks is to resolve emerging crises early on. A recent example is the escalating violence against the Rohingya people and the resulting refugee flows in the region. We should act as quickly as possible on the issue to offer both political and humanitarian support for alleviating the suffering and ending the conflict. Germany will again increase its aid to the Rohingya through the International Red Cross. We are committed to providing political and humanitarian support, as well as to practical peacebuilding, in many crisis regions around the world. And while military engagement under United Nations auspices is also sometimes necessary, we must ensure that we do not create any imbalances in that regard.

To bring up the North-South Commission again, its report included the impressive finding that, at the time it appeared, a half-day of the world's military expenditure would have sufficed to finance the entire malaria eradication programme. I suspect that today we would not even need that much. The world's current annual spending on weapons is just under $1.7 trillion. To achieve Sustainable Development Goal 1 and thereby eradicate extreme poverty in the world by 2030, we would need only 10 per cent of that. Sustainable Development Goal 4, on education, would require even less per year. With that in mind, Germany has tripled its funding for civilian peacebuilding measures in the past few years.

Thankfully, progress has been made in some areas, for example in Iraq. We must work fast to consolidate the successes achieved there in combating the so-called Islamic State by initiating reconstruction and stabilization measures in the cities and regions that have been liberated. Germany has therefore decided to make an additional €250 million available for the reconstruction of Mosul. We cannot abandon the victims of the thugs of the Islamic State. We must help them return to their country. It is also important to strengthen a democratic and inclusive Iraqi State and ensure that the actions of an individual region do not leave it exposed to a relapse into destabilization or civil war. We can only ask the Kurdistan Regional Government in northern Iraq not to trigger any new conflicts, which are the very last thing that the country needs.

We also have to make progress in the Ukraine conflict. The Minsk agreements, which Germany played a key role in drafting, provide a clear road map for peace, based on the principles of the peaceful settlement of disputes and the inviolability of borders. If proposals are now put forward for deploying a United Nations peacekeeping mission involving Blue Helmets, I think we should pursue that idea resolutely. While there is certainly not yet sufficient consensus on what such a mission should look like, the idea is worth testing if it can help achieve a ceasefire and the withdrawal of heavy weapons from the conflict zone. We would like to ask the Secretary-General to press for the proposal to be realized.

The North-South Commission pointed out that focusing solely on questions of war and peace was not enough. Those issues are also inextricably linked to the fair distribution of resources and to economic and social development and respect for universal human

rights. Only a world in which solidarity prevails will ultimately bring us security and stability. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development shows that the international community sees that as a common interest. If we want to make a reality of major ambitions such as peace, security and justice, we need stronger joint international institutions, and especially a stronger United Nations.

The founders of the United Nations were not naive. They had experienced the horrors of the first half of the twentieth century. For that very reason, they bequeathed to us the Charter of the United Nations, with its timeless principles and maxims. But while the principles of the United Nations are not outdated, the Organization has to adapt to the challenges of our times. We therefore support the Secretary-General's efforts to push ahead with bold reforms within the United Nations. He is setting the right priorities. The success of United Nations reform is largely up to us, the Member States. We have to work together to ensure that the United Nations is more efficient and has greater clout. In my view, reform efforts should not focus primarily on budget cuts. On the contrary, the United Nations will need more resources if it is to fulfil its mandate. We must therefore provide it with the means it needs to be successful. However, at present the figures tell a different story. The World Food Programme currently receives less than 50 per cent of the funding it needs to combat hunger crises around the world. Today a mere 15 per cent of contributions to the United Nations Development Programme are voluntary, non-tied payments, although in 2011 they were still at 50 per cent. The same is true for other United Nations aid programmes, and sometimes the outlook is even bleaker.

It should not be the job of those in positions of responsibility at the United Nations to spend more time sending begging letters seeking the necessary funding than in organizing effective assistance. We must change course and grant the United Nations more freedom with resources in exchange for greater transparency in its use of funds. Germany at any rate intends to maintain its financial support for the United Nations. As the country that is the fourth-largest provider of assessed contributions to the United Nations and that goes far beyond that, being one of the biggest donors of global humanitarian assistance generally, our input is substantial.

I believe that as Member States we should now take on another reform project that is long overdue. That is the composition of the Security Council, which should finally reflect the realities of the twenty-first-century world. Today many more States than at the time of the establishment of the United Nations, more than 70 years ago, are shouldering the responsibility for peace and security and are prepared to live up to that responsibility as Members of the Organization. Germany is ready and willing to take on additional responsibilities, which is why we are seeking a non-permanent seat on the Council for the 2019-2020 term. We have clear goals in mind. Peace and security, global justice and human rights are indivisibly linked. We are preparing for reform of the United Nations and its Security Council, and we intend to work in partnership with all countries of the United Nations in Africa, Asia, the Americas and Europe, for we can resolve global problems only if we refrain from focusing solely on national interests and instead work to reach a fair and peaceful balance of interests among all nations. Yes, that is an arduous process. But we must muster the courage to go down that path. For as Willy Brandt, who headed the North-South Commission after he left office as Chancellor, once said, "We firmly believe that problems created by men can also be solved by men". Let us work on that together.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Sergey Lavrov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Lavrov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): In December of last year, the General Assembly adopted resolution 71/190, on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order, which clearly stipulated the inadmissibility of interference in the internal affairs of States and of coups d'état as a method of transferring power, and the importance of excluding from international relations certain States' efforts to exert unlawful pressure on others, including through the extraterritorial application of national jurisdictions. An overwhelming majority of Member States voted in favour of the resolution. The minority was chiefly represented by the very countries that, contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, are attempting to dominate world affairs and impose their own development models and values on other States and peoples, led by a one-sided logic that undermines international law.

But the world is not standing still. We were pleased that United States President Donald Trump

unequivocally stated from this rostrum the day before yesterday (see A/72/PV.3) that it is important to comply with the principles of sovereignty in international affairs and to lead by example rather than by imposing one's will on other nations, and that countries with different values, cultures and aspirations can not only coexist but can work side by side on a basis of mutual respect. I believe that we can all subscribe to those words, especially if United States foreign policy will in fact be conducted on that basis.

Russia has always abided by the principles of sovereignty, non-interference in the affairs of other States, the equality of peoples and mutual respect in its international dealings, and it will continue to uphold them. In the past quarter century, despite challenges, our country has taken on in good faith its share of the work of eliminating the legacy of the Cold War and has done much to strengthen trust and understanding in Europe, the Atlantic region and all over the world. However, that has not been reciprocated by our Western partners, intoxicated as they were by the illusion of the onset of the end of history, and who are still trying to adapt rudimentary institutions designed for an era of bloc-versus-bloc confrontation to today's realities. NATO wants to recreate the climate of the Cold War and refuses to implement the principle it solemnly declared in the 1990s — equal and indivisible security throughout the region of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

The West has built its policies according to the principle of "he who is not with us is against us", and has proceeded with the heedless expansion of NATO eastwards, fomenting instability in post-Soviet geopolitics and inciting anti-Russian feeling. It is that policy that lies at the root of the protracted conflict in Ukraine. Despite the efforts of the Normandy format and the Trilateral Contact Group, the authorities in Kyiv constantly come up with new ploys to interfere with the implementation of their commitments under the package of measures outlined in the Minsk agreements of 12 February 2015 and endorsed by the Security Council.

But even in those circumstances, Russia has been focused on constructive effort and on finding mutually acceptable ways to implement the Minsk agreements. In response to concerns that have been expressed about the current security situation, President Putin has launched an initiative to establish a United Nations mission to protect the OSCE observers in the Donbas region, and a corresponding draft resolution has been introduced in the Security Council. We believe Russia's proposal will help to facilitate a settlement of the internal crisis in Ukraine that resulted from the anti-constitutional coup led by ultra-radicals. We hope for constructive interaction on the issues with our European and United States partners, without zero-sum games.

Here at United Nations Headquarters, we should bear in mind how the United Nations began. The decisions of the Nuremberg Tribunal were a warning against forgetting the lessons of the Second World War and the disastrous consequences of attempts to take control of the world's destiny by trampling on the lawful interests of other nations and peoples. It is disgusting to use concerns about freedom of expression as a pretext for condoning radical movements that preach neo-Nazi ideology and support the glorification of Nazis and their associates. We need constant vigilance to maintain a secure shield against neo-Nazism, revanchism, extremism and xenophobia and strengthen international and intercultural harmony.

Inciting hatred and intolerance, terrorists, extremists and nationalists destroy and desecrate objects of historical, religious and cultural value. Civilized Europe tolerates the demolition of monuments to the liberators of the continent and heroes of the Second World War whose victory was the foundation for the United Nations. We think this issue should be a priority for immediate attention from the General Assembly and UNESCO with a view to establishing a legal framework to prevent such actions, and Russia intends to submit proposals for it. The continuing indifference to the shameful issue of statelessness that persists in Europe is also unacceptable, as is the suppression of minority languages, which is a gross violation of Council of Europe conventions.

History has shown us throughout the ages that arriving at lasting settlements to disputes is possible only through dialogue and finding a balance between the conflicting parties' core interests. Unfortunately, outright pressure is replacing diplomacy increasingly often in the arsenals of a number of Western countries. Imposing unilateral sanctions on top of those authorized by the Security Council is an illegitimate act that undermines the collective international effort. Today we have all been watching with alarm as the United States has imposed yet another set of restrictions — in fact, extraterritorial restrictions — on Iran, and threatening the implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of

Action, which has become a key factor in international and regional stability. The United States embargo on Cuba, which has gone on for more than half a century, is a demonstration of the uselessness of policies involving unilateral sanctions, and almost every Member State has been calling for it to be lifted for decades. It is time to listen to them.

The spiralling confrontation around the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is unraveling dangerously. We firmly condemn Pyongyang's adventurist nuclear-missile manoeuvres, which violate Security Council resolutions. But whipping up military hysteria is not only a blind alley, it is a deadly one. It goes without saying that all Security Council resolutions must be implemented but, along with sanctions, they all include provisions on the importance of resuming talks. We must stop blocking those provisions. There is no alternative to the political and diplomatic route, based on a dialogue among all interested parties, for addressing the Korean peninsula's nuclear problem. We urge all responsible members of the international community to support the Russian-Chinese road map, as outlined by the Foreign Ministries of Russia and China in a joint statement on 4 July.

Incitement to disorder and threats of violent intervention in the cause of the democratization of Venezuela are unacceptable, as is any action aimed at undermining the legitimate Government of any country. In any internal conflict, the international community must encourage the parties to take the path of national reconciliation and compromise. Efforts to ignore the opinions of others and resort to decrees and ultimatums, or to use force to circumvent the Charter of United Nations, have never done any good. The explosion of international terrorism, the millions of refugees and unprecedented waves of illegal migration are to a large degree the result of the attempts of the past few years to achieve regime change, including through the armed interventions that have wreaked havoc and destruction in the Middle East and North Africa and have paved the way for terrorists in parts of the world where they had never appeared before.

Despite the fact that the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) is pulling back in Syria and Iraq, considerable additional effort will be needed to stabilize the region. We should recall that we are fighting Al-Nusra as well as ISIL, despite the fact that for some reason Al-Nusra is tolerated by United States coalition members. Recent developments in Syria have given grounds for cautious optimism. The sixth international meeting on Syria, held in Astana on 14 and 15 September, finalized the establishment of the four de-escalation zones, which had been agreed on with the participation of Russia, Iran, Turkey, the United States, Jordan and the United Nations, with the support of many other countries. The agreements create the conditions for further progress towards implementing Security Council resolution 2254 (2015) on the basis of direct dialogue between the Government and the opposition aimed at uniting their efforts to eliminate the terrorist epicentre as soon as possible and restoring peace and unity throughout the country, while resolving its acute humanitarian problems. The most urgent task is to increase the supplies of humanitarian aid and demining the liberated territories. We believe firmly that anyone who sincerely desires peace for Syria and its people should take part in this process under the leadership of the United Nations and without any preconditions. The incidents where chemical weapons have been used in the region are a separate issue. Every case should be investigated honestly and professionally, with no attempts to manipulate the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism.

Finding solutions to humanitarian issues and reconciling conflicting parties are also relevant issues for other crises in the region, including the situations in Libya, Yemen and Iraq. In all of those situations, as with any conflict, Russia is pursuing a balanced policy and working with all parties without exception. With regard to issues in the Middle East and North Africa, we cannot put United Nations decisions on the Palestinian question and the Arab Peace Initiative on the backburner, much less consign them to oblivion. We believe that restoring Palestinian unity is crucial and welcome Egypt's efforts in that direction. Russia is ready to assist in every possible way with the resumption of direct talks between Israel and Palestine, and to cooperate with its partners in the Quartet and the Arab League of States for that purpose. As long as the Palestinian question goes unresolved, it will continue to be exploited by extremists, who are attracting ever more new recruits.

The never-ending bloody terrorist attacks around the world illustrate the illusory nature of efforts to create isolated safe havens. We can combat extremism and terrorism together, without double standards or hidden agendas, only based on the primary responsibility

of States, as envisaged in the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. We welcome the reform of United Nations counter-terrorism activities that the Secretary-General has initiated, which the General Assembly has endorsed. We see the appointment of a Russian to head the new United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism as an acknowledgement of the role that Russia has played in combating this evil, and we thank everyone for their support.

Russia is committed to the goal of achieving a nuclear-weapon-free world. Under the existing treaty regimes in the area of arms control and non-proliferation, the complete elimination of nuclear weapons should be the end result of a process of universal and total disarmament that continues to ensure equal and indivisible security. Attempts to outlaw nuclear weapons that ignore current realities and all the factors that can affect strategic stability serve only to make this common goal further off than ever and to undermine the consensus regimes of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

We urge everyone to say no to the militarization of the information space. We must work to stop it becoming an arena for political and military confrontation and prevent the use of information and communications technologies as instruments for exerting pressure, inflicting economic damage and spreading terrorist and extremist propaganda. The United Nations should focus its efforts on formulating rules for responsible behaviour in the digital sphere that can meet the security interests of all States. Russia has drafted a universal convention on countering cybercrime, including hacking, and we hope to launch discussions on it during the current session.

It is clear that in future the world will continue to confront a whole range of new, long-term problems affecting our entire civilization. We have no right to waste our energy, time and efforts on geopolitical games. We need collective approaches, not unilateral ones. The process of shaping a polycentric world order is also a trend — a changing event that reflects the redistribution of the global balance of power and the increasing role that the cultural and civilizational identity of peoples plays in it. All of us, including those who are used to telling the world what to do, will have to adapt to it. It is in our common interests not to try to restrain this natural process. We will have to work to ensure that the world order becomes fair and democratic, just as the founding fathers of the United Nations envisioned. Globalization should unite rather than divide people, while taking account of the interests of all States without exception and contributing to a stable and secure future for all humankind. Without mutual trust, we cannot hope for the effective implementation of the ambitious Sustainable Development Goals or the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, or for solutions to global issues that are so crucial to developing countries, such as food security, demographics and health care.

The fundamental principles of international relations should include the recognition of political pluralism, freedom of choice and the rule of law. We must stop relying on military alliances and instead provide support and security guarantees to States that opt for neutrality. On the economic front, we must work to lower barriers to trade and investment and stop politicizing economic relations. The International Olympic Movement, and sports in general, should remain outside politics. First and foremost, we must foster in young people respect for the cultural and civilizational diversity of today's world. We invite everybody to the nineteenth World Festival of Youth and Students, which my country will host in Sochi less than a month from now. Another important event will take place in Russia at the same time, when St. Petersburg convenes the 137th Inter-Parliamentary Union Assembly, at which the main topic for discussion will be "Promoting cultural pluralism and peace through interfaith and inter-ethnic dialogue". Let us encourage dialogue among various cultures and religions and stop using historical events to foment hatred and fear.

A philosophy of coexistence, unity and harmonization of countries' different interests underlies President Vladimir Putin's proposal for a greater Eurasian partnership, open to all States of Asia and Europe, with the goal of creating an economic and humanitarian space based on the principle of the indivisibility of security. It goes without saying that equal rights for all, individuals and States, would be a universal requirement, as stated in the Charter of the United Nations. Those just and equitable principles form the foundation for the activities of various organizations in which Russia actively participates, including the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Collective Security Treaty Organization, the Eurasian Economic Union, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the BRICS group of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. We also continue to build relations

with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the African Union, the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States and other associations of Asian, African and Latin American countries. Through our joint efforts we have achieved a more balanced approach in the work of organizations such as the Group of 20, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, the International Monetary Fund and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

We believe in the vitality of this Organization and would like the Secretary-General to play an active role in facilitating the full realization of its potential based on the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, while respecting the prerogatives of its intergovernmental bodies. Peacekeeping reform in particular requires a carefully tailored approach, without abrupt shifts or abandoning decades of invaluable accumulated experience.

Two thousand years ago, the Roman philosopher Seneca wrote, "We are born to live together". The founding fathers of the United Nations understood that better than anyone. They believed — and enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations — that our God-given existence on a single planet should compel all of us to unite in order to prevent the scourge of new wars. If we are to do that today, we badly need to revive the culture of diplomacy and dialogue and the quest for a balance of our interests, rather than making rash, instinctive decisions in our desire to punish those who disobey us. What this is really about is preserving humankind in all its richness and diversity. Russia has always been, and always will be, open to working together with all those who show that they are ready to meet halfway and cooperate on a basis of equality and mutual respect. We will continue to uphold those principles in the work of the United Nations in the interests of improving global governance and genuinely democratizing international relations.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Wang Yi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China.

Mr. Wang Yi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The theme of the General Assembly at this year's session, "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet", is highly relevant, especially for an Organization that has made an exceptional contribution to peace and development. The United Nations has upheld its mission to support world peace by setting up a collective security mechanism, defusing regional hotspots and deploying peacekeepers. It has been instrumental in preventing full-scale wars and securing more than seven decades of relative peace for humankind. It has pursued its goals for development by setting a global development agenda and mobilizing resources worldwide. The United Nations has helped many developing countries onto a fast track to development, leading billions of people to modernization.

But since the ideals of the United Nations have not yet been fully realized, countries must persist in their efforts. We live in an era defined by deepening trends towards a multipolar world, the collective emergence of emerging markets and developing countries, steady progress in globalization and the application of information technology, and an exciting new phase in the scientific and technological revolution. In humankind's pursuit of greater development and prosperity, we see opportunities as never before. We are also living in a world that is witnessing profound changes in the international landscape and the balance of power. We see major threats, traditional and non-traditional, inadequate drivers of global growth and an increasing backlash against globalization. In our pursuit of lasting peace and sustainable development we are encountering unprecedented challenges. We are once again at a crossroads, so it is time to make the right choices between peace and war, openness and isolation, unity and division.

Two years ago, from this rostrum, Xi Jinping, President of the People's Republic of China, called on us to foster a new form of international relations, based on win-win cooperation, with a view to building community and a shared future for humankind (see A/70/PV.13). President Xi's vision is a great one, reflecting his firm grasp of the prevailing trends of our times. It is also China's answer to the question of the kind of future that humankind should build, and it is fully aligned with the purposes of the United Nations and the aspirations of its Member States. With the understanding and support of the international community, it can inspire us as a common goal.

To ensure peace, development and dignity for all, we must embrace the spirit of the United Nations and move its work forward. The United Nations must continue to be the guardian of world peace, since the maintenance of peace and security is one of the core purposes of the Charter of the United Nations and

the primary mission of the Organization. The United Nations must encourage its members to live together in peace, as good neighbours, and to work to achieve shared, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security. The five permanent members of the Security Council must play an exemplary role in rejecting conflict and confrontation in favour of mutual respect and win-win cooperation. All Member States should treat one another as equals, choosing dialogue over confrontation and partnerships over alliances in their relations. Credibility and justice must be upheld and efforts must be made to find common ground, manage differences and work to settle disputes peacefully and reasonably.

We need a holistic approach to fighting terrorism. We must abide by the rule of law and avoid applying double standards. Terrorism should not be associated with any particular ethnic group or religion, and the United Nations should lead and coordinate efforts to build a global united front against it. Political solutions are the fundamental answer to hotspot issues. The parties to any conflict must stay committed to dialogue and negotiation, and the international community should work objectively and impartially to facilitate dialogue and promote peace, rather than stirring up trouble and making things more difficult. The United Nations should serve as the main channel for conflict prevention, make full use of Chapter VI of the Charter of the United Nations and step up political mediation efforts.

We are seeing some light on the horizon for a political settlement of the Syrian crisis. We should make good use of the Geneva and Astana channels and exert greater pressure for direct substantive talks between the Syrian Government and opposition. Alongside the talks, efforts must be made to achieve a cessation of hostilities, increase humanitarian assistance and launch post-war reconstruction in order to give people greater faith in peace talks.

The Palestinian question has been bogged down on the United Nations agenda for 70 years, and the international community owes the Palestinians a long-overdue and just solution. All settlement activities in the occupied territories and all violence against civilians must end immediately. Concerted efforts should be made to advance a political resolution based on a two-State solution and to restart the peace talks as soon as possible. We must think out of the box with a view to facilitating peace through development and helping the people of the region to lay the groundwork for peace.

The situation on the Korean peninsula is now a focus of international attention. Two days ago, on 19 September, we marked the twelfth anniversary of the 2005 joint statement of the Six-Party Talks. At the time, the six parties — China, as Chair, the United States, Russia, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the Republic of Korea and Japan — made concerted efforts, and the United States and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the two major parties involved, made political decisions. We formulated a road map for the denuclearization of the peninsula. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea undertook to abandon its nuclear programmes, and the United States to normalize its relations with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. All the parties committed to setting up a permanent peace mechanism for the peninsula. The joint statement opened new vistas for regional peace and stability and inspired hope for a peaceful settlement to the dispute.

Twelve years have passed. Some may think that the situation on the peninsula has changed and that the joint statement has become outdated, but we believe that things that follow progressive trends of the times are never outdated, and that decisions on the right side of history never become obsolete. If there has been any change, and if there is anything we need now, it is still denuclearization, but denuclearization that is more comprehensive, thorough and irreversible. There should be no new nuclear-weapon State, whether in the north or south of the peninsula, in North-East Asia or anywhere else in the world. We urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea not to continue along this dangerous path. We call on the United States to honour its formal commitment and on all the parties to play a constructive role in easing tensions. There is still hope for peace, and we must not give up. Negotiation is the only way out and deserves every effort. The parties should meet halfway by addressing one another's legitimate concerns. In China's view, the day when the denuclearization of the peninsula is achieved should also be the day when a peace mechanism is established. China has always been a force for peace. We have worked tirelessly for a peaceful settlement of the nuclear issue on the peninsula. Whatever changes happen, however long it takes and whatever the difficulties we may face, China will stay firmly committed to

the denuclearization of the peninsula, to dialogue and negotiations and to regional peace and stability.

The United Nations must remain a champion of international development. The implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development should be its top priority in the field of development. It is important to encourage Member States to seek complementarity between the Agenda and their own development strategies, to eliminate hunger and poverty and to leave no one behind. We must ensure equitable, inclusive and quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all. We should enhance the role of North-South cooperation as the main channel for international development and cooperation, while leveraging South-South and tripartite cooperation. Climate change is a major factor to consider where the sustainable development of humankind is concerned. It will be crucial to ensure that the United Nations continues to work on the follow-up to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and to urge all parties to uphold the principles of common but differentiated responsibilities, equitability, and respective capabilities, and to reinforce international cooperation on climate issues.

The problem of refugees is a result of regional instability and uneven development. The United Nations must respond to crises promptly through its humanitarian efforts. We must work to address the root causes of such problems by helping countries and regions to achieve development. Restoring the global economy to full recovery and growth continues to be an uphill task. The United Nations should promote the facilitation of liberalized trade and investment and work to build an open world economy. We must seize the opportunities that the newest phase of the scientific revolution presents, stay committed to reform, pursue innovation-driven development, find new spaces for development and foster a new development system.

The United Nations must continue to be a pacesetter on global governance. As an organization at the core of the contemporary international system, it can accurately reflect the state of affairs in global governance. It should therefore follow current trends and work to make international relations more democratic, rules-based and equitable. Our Organization belongs to all of its 193 Member States, which are all equal, regardless of their size and wealth. The United Nations should therefore promote a spirit of democracy and ensure that all countries enjoy equal rights and opportunities and follow the same rules in international affairs, enabling them to set international rules together, run global affairs together and share in development achievements together. At the same time, the United Nations should also constantly improve its institutions and mechanisms in order to uphold the interests of the majority of countries and to keep abreast of the evolving international landscape. It should promote the equal and uniform application of international law and stress the importance of fully and faithfully implementing it. It should urge all parties to observe the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, fulfil their responsibilities and obligations and keep the foundations of international law and order intact.

Globalization is an unstoppable trend. It is not a choice between East and West. It should not follow the law of the jungle, much less a winner-take-all approach. The United Nations should uphold the principle of extensive consultations, joint contributions and shared benefits, and work to make economic globalization more open, inclusive, balanced and beneficial to all.

The United Nations must remain a facilitator of exchanges among civilizations. It is the diversity of its civilizations that gives our global village its vitality. We should raise awareness about the importance of that diversity and be eager to respect, protect and promote it. Civilizations can complement one another as they seek common ground and make progress together through exchanges and mutual learning. We should encourage our various civilizations, cultures and countries to flourish together through interaction and healthy competition. UNESCO and the Alliance of Civilizations have a large role to play in that regard. We should also encourage and respect the efforts of countries to choose development paths that suit their national conditions. Countries with different systems and paths should respect and learn from one another in order to make progress together. The United Nations should serve as a platform for harmonious coexistence between countries with different systems and as a bridge for dialogue and exchange.

China's journey over the past five years has been a momentous one. Under the leadership of the eighteenth Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core, China has made remarkable achievements on all fronts, and socialism with Chinese characteristics has entered a new and historic stage. As we looking to the future, China's continuous progress will bring to the world greater benefits of peace, development and governance. China

is an anchor of world peace. Maintaining the stability of a country with a population of more than 1.3 billion people represents an enormous contribution to world peace. Aggression has never been in Chinese genes, and acts of colonization or plunder are nowhere to found in our history. President Xi has solemnly pledged that no matter how advanced China's development becomes, it will never seek hegemony or to expand or extend its sphere of influence. China will always vote for peace in the Security Council.

China is an engine for development and prosperity. The Belt and Road Forum for international cooperation that China successfully hosted last May has produced more than 270 cooperation deliverables. China wants to make the Belt and Road a road to peace, prosperity, openness and innovation that connects different civilizations. This project of the century will offer a new paradigm for efforts to promote world peace and development. It will also inject fresh impetus into the pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

Starting next year, China will host the China International Import Expo, make even greater strides in its opening up and provide a new driving force for the global economy.

China is a champion of multilateralism. It firmly upholds the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations; the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of countries; and the centrality of the United Nations in international affairs. No matter how the international landscape may change, China will stay firmly committed to multilateralism and will shoulder the responsibilities assigned it by the United Nations and will fulfil its due obligations to the world.

The Communist Party of China will soon convene its nineteenth national congress. This will be a very important meeting held at a time when China is reaching a decisive stage in the completion of the building of a moderately prosperous society in all respects and a key phase in the development of socialism with Chinese characteristics. It will open a new chapter in the pursuit of the Chinese dream. China will seek to realize its own dream in the context of the shared aspirations of all peoples of the world and continue to contribute to the development of all other countries through its own progress. Let us work together for a better future for humankind.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Luis Videgaray Caso, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the United Mexican States.

Mr. Videgaray Caso (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I am addressing the General Assembly today at a difficult and painful time for Mexicans. Our nation has been battered by Nature. In recent weeks, together with our sister nations of the Caribbean and the states of Florida and Texas, in the United States, we have been hit by tremendous natural disasters that have resulted in suffering, destruction and death.

The worst for Mexico was two consecutive earthquakes in only 12 days, which have put to the test not only our readiness and infrastructure but our very humanity. The first earthquake left approximately 100 people dead and 300,000 injured in the southern states of Chiapas and Oaxaca. The second, just 48 hours ago, so far has caused 273 deaths and the destruction of many houses, schools and bridges. It has left many people wounded in Mexico City and in the central part of Mexico.

In the face of these natural disasters, today more than ever I feel proud to be Mexican. Mexican society, united and in a spirit of solidarity, has taken to the streets to help and rescue the victims. We are seeing young people rescuing the old, children rescuing their parents, homemakers joining rescue brigades, neighbours collecting food, people opening their homes and turning them into shelters, and others forming human chains to clear debris and save the lives of those who are still trapped. It is with great hope that we inform the Assembly that we have been able to pull 51 people alive from collapsed buildings, and we hope to rescue many more.

At this difficult time, Mexicans are very moved by the many speedy gestures of solidarity on the part of the international community. Friends are there at difficult times, and we have seen with great emotion that Mexico has true friends throughout the world. Their timely help can make the difference between life and death for many. So far, priority has been given to rescue activities, helping people trapped in the rubble to be able to see the light of day once again. We are also providing immediate medical assistance to those who need it urgently, and have joined together to feed and shelter all those who have lost their homes or are afraid to return to them.

Leading these efforts is a society resolved to move forward stronger than ever. We have had vital help in assisting our people from our armed forces and civil protection authorities. The rescuers have not rested in this task, and yet much remains to be done.

On behalf of the people and the Government of Mexico, and on behalf of the President of all Mexicans, Enrique Peña Nieto, let me wholeheartedly express my gratitude for the innumerable shows of sympathy and support that we have received from throughout the world. This help shows us that to be in the United Nations following a natural disaster means being among one's family. Today Mexico feels embraced and is relieved to see that the world has not abandoned us in our tragedy. We would in particular like to thank Secretary-General António Guterres and the staff of the United Nations system that help with emergency situations by supporting urgent assistance efforts.

I should like also to thank the many countries that mobilized very quickly to send rescue teams and experts. This morning in Mexico City we woke up to the presence of rescue teams from Honduras and El Salvador, who were assigned to the Tlalpan area. Rescue teams from Israel were busy in Álvaro Obregón street; from the United States, in Escocia and Edimburgo streets; and from Panama, in Queretaro and Medellin streets. Rescue teams have recently arrived from Spain, and in the next few hours we are expecting teams from Ecuador, Japan, Colombia, Costa Rica and Peru and many other nations that have offered help, which we will definitely accept and avail ourselves of.

We give heartfelt thanks to the Governments of those countries for their solidarity. The Mexican people will not forget it.

The international solidarity that is on display in Mexico does not mean that we should not talk about the challenges facing the world, which can be overcome successfully only through that same solidarity. One of those challenges is the growing lack of confidence in multilateralism. In the past decade, the international economy experienced the impacts of a severe financial crisis in the more developed countries, which led to a sudden rise in unemployment, the loss of savings and a drop in the net worth of millions of families; many companies also went bankrupt. In addition, thousands of jobs are gradually disappearing owing to the growing use of robotics in certain industries and the automatization in the service industry. These factors have given rise to a wave of deep fear and social frustration, which have led to the rejection of an open world and of globalization.

Terrorism has also contributed to increasing fears of the outside world among the peoples of various regions. This wave of fear and rejection of globalization has reached the United Nations and other international organizations. Today we hear voices questioning the effectiveness of multilateralism in dealing with global challenges. It would seem today that the community of sovereign States is dealing with a false dilemma: to persevere in cooperation and in building bridges of understanding or, on the contrary, to close borders and build walls based on fear. Mexico rejects that dilemma. Mexico has been, is and will remain a sovereign State with a deep multilateral vocation. No country, however powerful, is capable of responding on its own to the enormous shared challenges of our time.

It is multilateralism that makes the difference between an international system of States that are limited to mutual coexistence and an international society in which sovereign States are committed to a joint and responsible coexistence for the solution of the common challenges. The commitment of States to multilateralism reduces anarchic tendencies in the international system. A world based on sovereignly accepted rules and procedures is in everyone's interest, because multilateralism sets acceptable international parameters within which sovereign States accept to maintain their conduct.

The achievements of multilateralism in recent years are many. The fight against climate change, the preservation of biodiversity, the regulation of the arms trade, the new paradigm of international drug control policy and the response to natural disasters are some examples of that. Today, Mexico is betting once again on multilateralism in the process of negotiating the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration.

Today, as Mexico confronts a tragedy, Mexicans once again see the value of multilateralism through the support provided by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). We recognize the value of being part of an authentic international community. In minutes, OCHA helped us to identify the countries that had the capacities to support our emergency. In that moment of pain, multilateralism and the United Nations showed the Mexicans their most generous and practical face.

Few instruments call for solidarity among human beings with the power of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. For Mexico, the Agenda is a State commitment. In that regard, we established a national council, headed by the President of the Republic, and the Federal Government will prepare its budget and development plans based on the criteria contained in the Agenda. The 2030 Agenda should serve as a new focal point for the work of our Organization. We must channel the energies of the United Nations towards effectively seeking the prosperity of the people of the planet.

Mexico will always be in favour of peace and the peaceful settlement of disputes. Unfortunately, armed conflicts continue to demand the involvement of the United Nations. That is why Mexico has participated in United Nations peacekeeping operations since 2014. The successful case of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace is a significant example. However, if the United Nations is to be more effective in that task, it is necessary to strengthen its preventive capacities, focused on the individual, the promotion of development and, of course, respect for human rights.

The existence of nuclear weapons poses a threat to all humankind. In view of the persistence of the nuclear danger, the Government of Mexico signed the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons yesterday, which the executive will soon submit to the approval of the Senate of the Republic. At the same time, Mexico will support all Security Council resolutions against nuclear threats, and today we reiterate our full support for the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in order to ensure its effective compliance.

We unequivocally condemn all terrorist attacks, regardless of their motivation. That is why we support the multilateral initiatives of the United Nations, which, together with the efforts to eradicate terrorism, promote tolerance and the respect for human rights. States have the obligation to protect and promote human rights. However, women and girls suffer sexual violence, exclusion, marginalization, discrimination and, in extreme cases, abominable murders. Mexico recognizes its obligation to redouble efforts to combat those practices and punish their perpetrators. States should be committed in solidarity to the empowerment of women and girls. Gender equality is a prerequisite for a world in which peace and development are truly sustainable, inclusive and lasting.

Mexico reaffirms its openness to the world. We are expanding and diversifying our political, economic and cooperative links with all regions, including Europe, Asia and the Pacific. Mexico and the Union Europe are about to complete the updating of their legal framework, which will have stronger instruments, based on shared values, such as the defence of multilateralism, to better face the global challenges of today together. In the same way, we are strengthening our ties with China, Japan and the Republic of Korea. We have launched trade negotiations with Australia, New Zealand, Singapore and Israel, to mention just a few.

At the same time, we are determined to deepen our ties with the region to which we proudly belong, Latin America and the Caribbean. The natural disaster that Mexico experienced proves that solidarity is a critical value for the countries of our region. Mexico is standing and will continue to stand in solidarity with each and every one of the nations of Latin America and the Caribbean. We want to stand in solidarity with our brothers from El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras in their ongoing efforts to strengthen the security, stability and prosperity of their societies in the interest of increasing the safety and prosperity of their peoples. Mexico also wishes to stand in solidarity with our brothers of the Caribbean, who are facing a huge challenge in their reconstruction. Mexico has been and will continue to be present in that effort.

We want to stand in solidarity with the Venezuelan people, who are struggling to recover their democracy. We will maintain our solidarity with our partners of the Pacific Ocean Alliance — Chile, Colombia and Peru — in order to continue promoting innovation, trade and investment in our countries. We want to stand in solidarity with members of the Southern Common Market — Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay — with which the Pacific Ocean Alliance has started a promising process of rapprochement. We want to be in solidarity with our Cuban brothers, who aspire to open up to the world and normalize their relations with all nations. Mexico is also a proud member of North America. As a sovereign and solidary nation, we believe in the process of North American integration so that the region can consolidate itself as the most competitive in the world. Mexico aspires to and foresees a region where bridges of friendship and cooperation prevail, along with the principle of shared responsibility in facing our common problems. Today, the people and the Government of Mexico

reiterate from this rostrum their deep solidarity with all Mexicans living in the United States, regardless of their immigration status. The Government of Mexico has the moral and legal obligation to protect and support them. Through our consulates, we will continue to support them, defend their rights and advocate for their causes. We are deeply proud of them and their contribution to the North American economy, culture and society. We are particularly proud of the "dreamers" and will continue to strive for a permanent solution to their legal status.

With Canada and the United States, we are making progress in updating the North American Free Trade Agreement. We are participating in that process with absolute seriousness. Mexico will always defend its legitimate national interests in the conviction that it is possible to achieve a very positive result for all three countries. We know that the world is focused on the outcome of those negotiations. We have an opportunity to consolidate a more prosperous, more competitive and more just North America.

In the present moment of pain, Mexicans see the value of a more supportive, efficient, effective, transparent and representative United Nations. The Government that I represent supports the proposals of Secretary-General António Guterres, because they are aimed at making the United Nations system a more effective and solidary Organization.

The message that I bring today is that Mexico will overcome the recent catastrophe and our nation will be stronger for it. Mexicans are a strong people. The people and the Government of Mexico are still standing. Today, Mexicans thank the world and the United Nations. We thank the United Nations agencies for being aware of us. We thank Governments for their sympathy, support and extraordinarily valuable help. We thank all for their solidarity. We thank the citizens of the world who are thinking of us today. We thank them for their prayers and good wishes and for standing with Mexicans, today and always.

The meeting rose at 3.30 p.m.